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Number 68

February 1990

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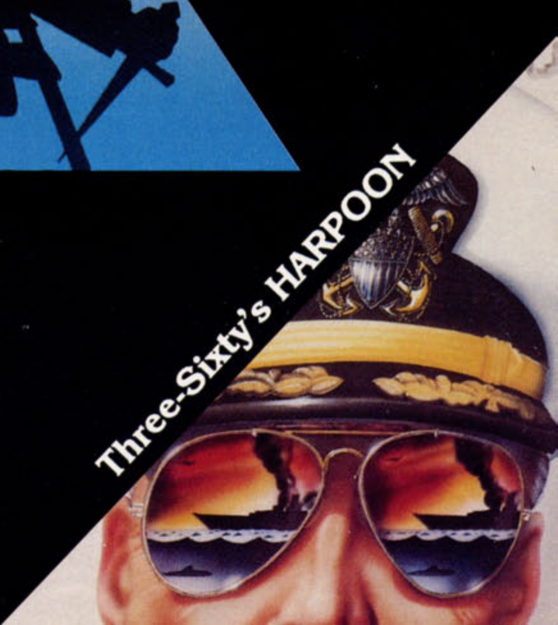
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The Definitive Computer Game Magazine



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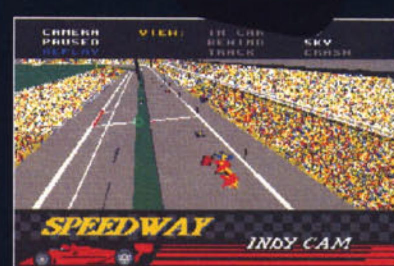
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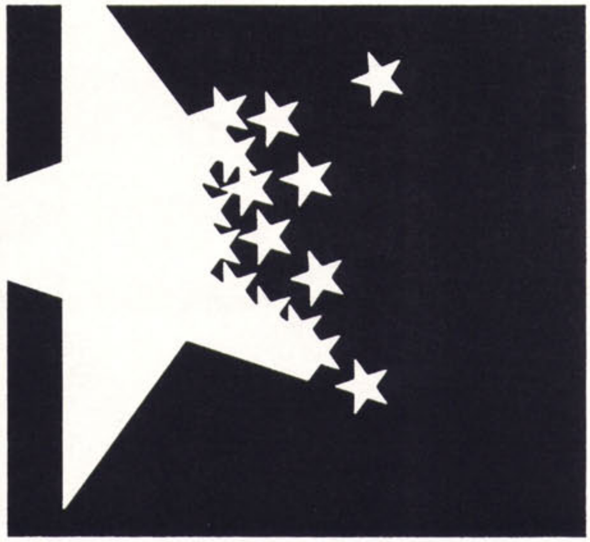
COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

Covering the World of Computer Games For Nine Years

February 1990 **Number 68**



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The Colonel's Bequest



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Winter CES Report

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Circle Reader Service #66 »


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Access Software
545 West 500 South
Bountiful, UT 84010

FAMOUS COURSES VOL I,II,III: These add-on segments for the World Class Leader Board system each provide four new courses with improved graphics and "Real Sound", the company's digitized sound system that doesn't require a sound board. Tee off at Pebble Beach, Baniff Springs, and Dorado Beach with the swap of a disk. IBM ($19.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

Arcadia
18001 Cowan, Stes A & B
Irvine, CA 92714

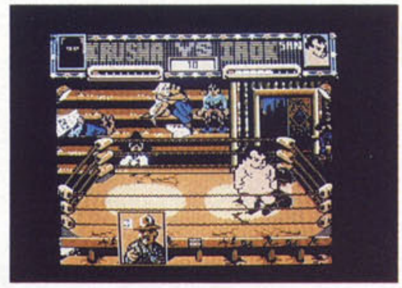
ARTURA: Very loosely based on the Arthurian legend, this action game puts players in the realm of Morgause, Artura's evil sister. Players must battle the minions of Morgause while searching for the magical runes that will help them in their quest to free the beautiful Nimue. What a concept! C64 (pictured) ($29.99), IBM & ST ($39.00). Circle Reader Service #2.

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Living Jigsaws



Sgt. Slaughter's Mat Wars



Star Trek V



Never Mind



Breach 2



Lawman

Broderbund
17 Paul Drive
San Rafael, CA 94903

IF IT MOVES SHOOT IT!: The title says it all. This European design is pure shoot'em up. The graphics are outstanding and the joystick action extremely challenging. Joystick wimps need not apply. IBM (pictured) & Amiga ($29.95). Circle Reader Service #3

Cinemaware
4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd
Westlake Village, CA 91362

IT CAME FROM THE DESERT: You might worry about a company whose 'A' product line is based on 'B' movies, but you needn't be concerned about this cross between the sci-fi 'B' classics, "It" and "Them". Some of Cinemaware's best graphics yet, and a coherent plot line will keep you glued to the screen and away from the snack bar. Amiga ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #4

Data East
1850 Little Orchard St.
San Jose, CA 95125

MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL: Data East attempts to capture the excitement of Monday Night Football in this first of several planned sports releases. There are plenty of pretty pictures; cheerleaders, the Goodyear blimp, Frank Gifford, and digitized player sound, but not a whole lot of game. It has limited play creation and player alteration capabilities, a somewhat awkward interface, and does not keep track of stats. IBM (pictured)

Continued on page 69

Why We Do What We Do

Judging from our readers' feedback in letters to the editor and comments on R.I.D. cards, there are a number of readers who want to know why we have certain styles/policies. For example, some readers dislike the use of fiction in reviews or sneak previews. When *CGW* uses fiction in an article, it is intended to illustrate something about a game. Sometimes the fiction simply helps establish the game's fiction, but sometimes it often illustrates actual game play. The recent *MechWarrior* sneak preview (*CGW #66*) used fiction to illustrate targeting procedures and overheating problems found in the Battletech universe, but not in the game.

Others want to know why the basic information box which we include with our reviews is not usually found in our sneak previews. This is because sneak previews are written based on pre-production copies of the game and we do not mention details like hardware requirements, copy protection, documentation and price because those factors may change (and have changed in the past) before they hit the market. Usually, a game which is "sneak previewed" will be featured in a follow-up article after it has reached the market. Some want to know why we even "bother" with sneak previews. In essence, *CGW* publishes sneak previews so that readers will have some idea of hot new products at about the same time they hit the market. Otherwise, the lead time (up to three or four months, depending on when the production copies arrive at our offices) could cause the coverage to be less valuable. It is one device we use to stay current.

Some readers want to know how some games appear on the ratings chart without having appeared on the latest list of questions. The ratings list is a cumulative database. If a game has "ever" been rated in *CGW*, we have its numbers figured into the ratings. Other readers are under the impression that the number of respondents given in the ratings chart is the TOTAL number of respondents. This is the AVERAGE number of respondents received EACH time the game has been rated. How recently the game was released, the availability of the game and the machine formats for the game are all factors which have some bearing on the number of readers who respond.

We hope this "behind the pages" look at why we do some of the things readers often ask about will help all of our readers enjoy perusing the pages of *CGW* even more than they already do. If not, we *always* read your letters!

Win A Free Trip To Britain!

In search of the best air combat simulation player among CGW readers, Lucasfilm Games and Computer Gaming World announce *Their Finest Hour: The Battle of Britain* Competition.

Grand prize is an all-expense paid trip to England with game designer Lawrence Holland and computer Gaming World Editor-in-Chief Russell Sipe concurrent with the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain. Departing September 1990, the highlight of the two-week tour is *Battle of Britain Day*, September 15, 1990 and the 50th Anniversary ceremony in London. Led by Valor Tours' Bob Reynolds, Secretary of the Royal Air Force Association, the trip includes the Farnborough Air Show, numerous visits to U.S. WW II air bases in East Anglia, extensive museum and airfield tours, and even a Cambridge pub notorious for its RAF patrons; all to recreate this monumental event 50 years later.

The competition is three-tiered with players first submitting a qualifying pilot record by March 15, 1990. If chosen to compete at Level Two, players submit required campaign play records and original missions they have created using the "Mission Builder" feature, due by May 15, 1990. The five finalists chosen for Level Three then play each others original missions on or before June 15, 1990. Top scorer is then off to England in time for the 50th Anniversary!

COMPETITION RULES

LEVEL ONE

1. Submit a pilot record saved to disk with the required qualifying score--a minimum of 1000 points.

• First create a pilot from the roster screen during flight briefing. Any pilot type is acceptable. Consult page 81 of *Their Finest Hour* manual for more information. All types of pilots are eligible.

• After your qualifying pilot has reached the minimum requirements of 1000 points, copy your pilot file onto a 5 1/4" or 3 1/2" floppy disk.

Note: As a pilot is named, the program creates a DOS file name using one of the following extensions, based on type of pilot. This file name should be used in copying.

PLANE	EXTENSION NAME
Spitfire/Hurricane	.RAF
BF 109	.109
BF 110	.110
Stuka	.J87
Ju88/He111/Do17	.BMB

Example: For a Spitfire pilot named Joe the file name is JOE.RAF.

2. 100 disks will be chose randomly from those received and reviewed for qualifying requirements.

3. The qualifying pilot disk must have name, address, and phone clearly labeled on the outside and must contain only one pilot record file. Disks with more than one file or whose identifying label is illegible will be disqualified. Only one entry per person.

4. Send disk to address below. Entry must be postmarked by March 15, 1990. All disks received during all three competition levels become property of Lucasfilm Games and cannot be returned.

Battle of Britain COMPETITION
LUCASFILM GAMES
P.O. Box 10307
San Rafael, CA 94912

5. The 100 qualifiers chosen will be notified by mail and will receive full instructions and requirements for Level Two play at that time.

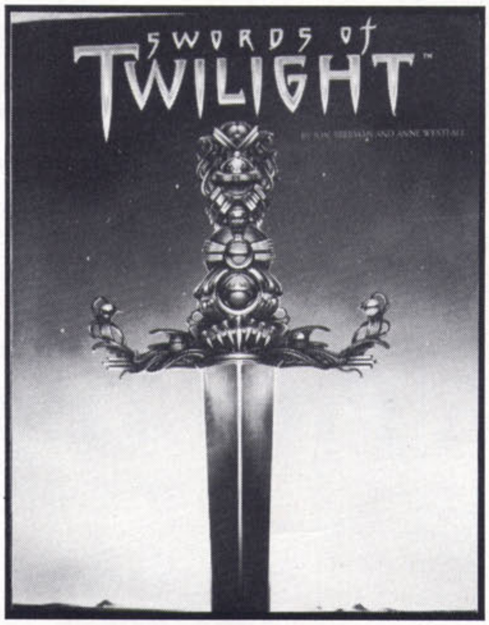
Employees, contractors, or freelancers of Lucasfilm Ltd., Electronic Arts, or Golden Empire Publications, are not eligible to enter. Void where prohibited.



A Sword and An Ogre to Steer Her By

Electronic Arts' "Swords of Twilight"

by Douglas Seacat



TITLE:	Swords of Twilight
SYSTEM:	Amiga
# PLAYERS:	1-3
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNERS:	Jon Freeman Anne Westfall
PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts San Mateo, CA

Britomart grabbed instinctively for her blade as the pale translucent forms of wraiths formed before them, moving closer with haunting grace. Bercilak grabbed Britomart's arm, whispering furiously in the half-darkness, "Be still, friend. We won't get to Shadowlord Maron's dwelling by fighting his every guard."

The wraiths halted at a distance, "A strange place to find the living." They seemed suspicious, but not hostile, yet.

"Well met. We come in peace," the enchanter, Benedic, greeted with warm tones.

"Yes," continued the warrior, "my name is Bercilak, Albion's green champion. We would seek aid in this fine place."

The wraiths seemed to take council in this and then, replied with almost warmth. "Perhaps, you are hungry; would you care to share a meal with us?"

Bercilak winked at the still scowling Britomart and agreed to the meal, which wasn't at all bad considering it was served by four of the darkest undead. He fingered the jeweled hilt at his waist as they departed, feeling the frost of the legendary Sword of Cold, Fireproof. Soon Maron would live no more, with a Sword of Twilight buried in his skull, and shadow would be forced to retreat further from glorious Albion, the land of Good.

Swords of Twilight (*Swords*), the new role-playing adventure from **Electronic Arts**, is the first CRPG which allows true multi-player role-playing such that each player can perform simultaneous action, dialogue and travel. In addition, the plot is executed in the fine *Starflight* tradition where information is worth more than gold and the plot takes many days to unravel.

The game takes place in a universe of eight worlds, all connected in a continuous loop by the Rainbow Road. These eight worlds are parallel universes, where landscapes are very similar, but cultures and people vary widely. At opposite poles of the Rainbow Road are Albion and Archeron. They are antitheses of each other in that the former is a land of good and abundance, while the latter is home to evil and violence. Between these two poles lie six worlds which have recently been captured by Shadowlords (minions of evil who hope to enslave Albion). To accomplish this, the Shadowlords have scattered the seven protective Swords of Twilight throughout the worlds they control. Each Shadowlord guards (or has placed under guard) a Sword that might harm one of his fellow Shadowlords. Thus protected, these evil beings plan the conquest of Albion.

Fortunately, there are several factors standing in evil's way. First, the gates to the Rainbow Road are guarded by powerful dragons, who are quite particular about who they let travel the Road. Second, the good people in every world are willing to ally with anyone who desires to destroy the Shadowlords. Third, Gloriana (Queen of Albion) has gathered together the greatest and most hopeful of the good heroes in order to send them forth in small campaigns to actively steal the Swords of Twilight and kill the Shadowlords. This is where the human player(s) come(s) in: controlling selected heroes in the fight to save Albion.

The game itself uses a three person interface, with two players controlling joysticks and the third (usually a magic user) using the keyboard. Either or both of the joystick characters can be controlled by the computer at any time (very fortuitous should a human player not be able to participate in a given session).

The screen is divided into four exterior windows and a central graphic map. These four outer windows allow conversation, interaction and trading to occur, while movement and combat are shown on the larger graphic map. The Archon-style icons that represent the players and occupants are nicely rendered, if not overly varied. Indicators of both attitude and health can be easily seen for every character in the four outer windows. For example, if a person is wounded, his name will change color reflecting the degree of the injury. Also, attitude is reflected through adjectives such as "Polite" and "Friendly" displayed on the screen.

Character generation is handled in a very interesting manner. Instead of creating a random character with straightforward (and often meaningless) statistics, the player must choose three adventurers from a list of 30 possible characters. There are three basic classes in which the characters fall: Knight, Champion and Mage. A Knight is a fighter ranked anywhere from 1st (novice) to 6th level, a Champion is a 7th level Knight, and a Mage is a magic users who utilizes one of

five types of magic (Goety, Witchcraft, Wizardry, Enchantment or Sorcery).

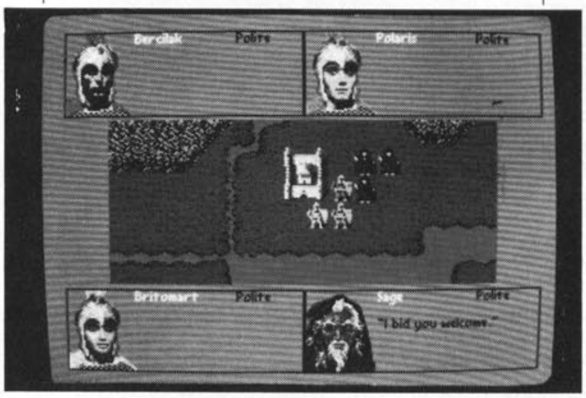
Rather than using conventional attributes as lifeless statistics, *Swords* chooses a more direct, hands-on approach. Each character has two forms of ratings: physical and mental. Neither are displayed as numbers. The physical ratings include speed, weapons skill, strength and endurance. The mental ratings feature such matters as courage, tact, suspicion and calmness. All of these details come out in game play as a player becomes more familiar with his character. Players discover, for instance, that Bercilak is extremely strong since he can take some opponents out with one blow, but they notice that he is also quite slow (it takes a few seconds for him to prepare for the next sword thrust).

Another departure from traditional CRPGs is a shift away from advancing via increased levels. Some advancement is possible, but it is neither the focus of the game nor a delineation of one's score. Instead, the characters have a definite "quest" to undertake and *this* is the objective. It takes plenty of good deeds to advance a character, but character advancement is strictly secondary to successfully accomplishing the quest.

All options, except magic, are handled via the joystick. If the button is pressed, a menu appears. Players can scroll through all their options from shifting one's attitude to actually talking with people via this simple interface. Magic, as noted earlier, is handled through the keyboard. Each type of magic uses a different process, but all of them involve typing certain commands and/or mantras to invoke a magical effect.

It should be noted that only one champion and one magic user are allowed in a single party. Therefore, the most common party (and from this writer's viewpoint, the most effective) contains a Knight, a Champion and a Mage. However, neither a Mage nor a Champion are absolutely essential to success and it is possible to have a party with three Knights, two Knights and a Champion, or a Mage and two Knights. It is up to the player's discretion.

The initial choices, as the manual aptly states, are not extremely important, since it is entirely possible (and even, sometimes advisable) to change the party at various times during the game. As Albion is a world which contains no evil, players can practice conversation and object manipulation with relatively little risk. Magic does not work in Albion, however, so a trip on the Rainbow Road is recommended for those wanting to experiment with various types of magic. Before too long, the players should become comfortable with game play and will undoubtedly make a decision about a long-term party. Repeated trips back to Gloriana's castle in order to change the group can become tedious, so it is recommended that the party stick with a group for some time after the initial experimentation.



At this point, the game becomes a quest for information, as the players must unravel the intricate pieces of the plot. Solving the game requires much more than simply killing the Shadowlords and, without good communications skills, no party will get very far. Saving Albion will require, not only might, but also wit and an investigative ability to piece together clues and hints. The Shadowlords have been most thorough and time is definitely against the players. As the heroes trek, night falls, dawn rises, and food/shelter must be found while the Shadow creeps ever closer to Albion.

Nicks and Scratches (Critical Remarks)

While the game is, overall, very well-done, there are several aspects which could have made it better. One of these is game speed. Movement across the map is often artificially delayed, especially if the player party has an old wizard (such as Inderal, who is "ancient as the mountains") or a wounded comrade. This is because the group of players must stay in the same area, or else a "too far from others" warning will appear. As soon as someone hits the edge of the screen, this annoying warning flashes. While having elderly or wounded characters move slowly is a nice realistic detail, I wish the game was not quite so intrusive and nagging with its warnings. It would be better if the slow character were allowed to drift slightly out of sight until the leading characters noticed the predicament.

Another slow aspect of the game is the delay during encounters. When a group is first encountered, there is a lengthy disk access as the computer loads the proper graphics and an even longer delay as the game decides where to place the encountered party. This can become frustrating and might have a tendency to make some impatient players reticent to encounter people (which would be bad, since this is the most important aspect of the game). Less drive access and a faster search algorithm would be appreciated.

Two smaller complaints involve the soundtrack and the manual. The various soundtracks used in the game, including the interpretations from Wagner's Ring Cycle, quickly become monotonous and one is tempted to simply toggle them off. The manual, while handling the technical aspects of gameplay relatively well, fails to give any sort of background for the game. Would it have been too much to ask the authors of the game to offer some information on Albion's background or the Shadowlords' histories?

Another major frustration revolves around how the interface handles menus. While it is understandable that the programmers wanted all commands available by joystick, the menu lists can quickly become a hassle. This is especially true if the character is attacked when not in "Hostile" mode. In order to shift to an offensive position, the player must click through the menu system, find "Hostile", and then, exit the menu system to "Move" before any offensive action can actually be taken. All this time, the player is being pounded by enemies and taking possible damage. Even common menu commands (where life and death are not an issue) can be frustrating. To give an object to another person, the player must shift through "Talk", "Offer", "What" and then, find the object for donation. After some time, the player becomes accustomed to the system, but it still seems like an easier method could have been used (or, at least, a more logical hierarchy of menus).

Razor Edge and Jeweled Pommel (Commendations)

Despite these quibbles with the interface, *Swords of Twilight* is an excellent game and well-deserving of praise. The attention to detail alone make it worth buying: the characters are groggy upon first awakening; at dawn and dusk friendly strangers will provide food; a friend can be made even friendlier with a small . . . ah . . . donation (and even Ghouls won't eat their friends); sleeping inside provides more relief than sleeping on a stone; eating a full meal defeats hunger better

(Continued on page 66)

The Rumor Bag



by
Richard
Bergman
Bogart

(Continued from *CGW* #67)

It was still dark and my head throbbed like a contestant in a tournament for drum and bugle corps. I seemed to be in a moving vehicle and the powerful humm in the background sounded like a swamp cooler big enough to cool the Astrodome. It couldn't be. Either I was flying in a DC-3 or that was one heck of a wheel bearing going out on that right rear tire.

I sat up . . . gingerly . . . and realized I was flying in an antique plane. That's when I wished I were flying in either **Electronic Arts**' new "LHX Helicopter" simulation (a mission-based attack helicopter game) or **Spectrum-Holobyte**'s "AH-64" simulator (with elements of the "Advanced Tactical Helicopter" thrown in). I'd show them! Whoever had captured me probably didn't even know that **Spectrum-Holobyte** would be publishing an updated version of *Falcon* with even more types of planes and an infantry game, all designed to interface with *Tank* and the others via their *Electronic Battlefield System*.

The plane landed at a strange airfield. Historical relics were all around. Carefully peering out the window, I spotted a Sopwith Camel and a Spitfire before I saw them. There, on the tarmac, a fellow in a trenchcoat was talking to an incredibly shapely blonde. I listened. "I don't care what you tell him," he said, "the problems of some rumor guy don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy mixed-up industry of ours. Now, if you don't get in there in the plane where you belong and tell him about **Data East**'s *Drakkhen*, you'll regret it. Maybe not this issue, and maybe not next issue, but *some* issue and for the rest of your career."

She entered the plane as gracefully as the Queen enters Buckingham Palace. She smiled and told me that *Drakkhen* would use a combination of bit-mapped and polygon filled 3-D images to generate graphics on the fly and offer fast scrolling and scaling to provide the illusion of perspective and movement. I looked sternly at her and she began to cry. She said she was sorry someone had said the program would have more than 200 spells. There were really 23 basic spells which react differently according to time, space, monster, etc. She thought I'd really like it, though, along with a puzzle-solving science fiction game called *Chamber of the Sci-Mutant Priestess* with an emphasis on replayability.

She leaned over and bludgeoned me with her exotic perfume as she whispered in my ear. "So, what do you hear about space games?" I couldn't help myself. The combination of her sensuous presence and the chemical potency of her scent had lowered my resistance to the danger point.

I confessed, "**Microprose** has taken their space adventure off the back burner and expects to publish it this year. And . . . remember *Starship Commander*? Gilman Louie's starship simulation on the Apple? **Spectrum Holobyte** will probably release a brand-new version of *Starship Commander* in the first quarter of 1991, sort of a "Starship Commander: The Next Generation".

She led me out of the plane, where I was met by a police captain in an anachronistic uniform. I blustered that I wanted to know why I was being held. He asked me if I knew Bill Leslie, former designer for **Omnitrend**. "Did you know he has formed a new company called **FunLabs**?" I confessed ignorance as he described a game called *Abstracta* which they are attempting to market.

Abstracta was somewhat inspired by Jack Chalker's "Well World" novels. The player starts out with first person perspective as a being held in an alien zoo. To succeed, the player must work his/her way up the food chain. Strength, vision, and perception all changes (and the display on the screen changes to reflect this) as the player does. In one phase, the player may see clearer and farther. In another, the player may move faster. "I suppose you are going to tell me," I interrupted "that game time goes by faster or more slowly, depending on one's metabolism speed." He was not amused, but told me that there are five different environments and tons of alien animals to keep things interesting.

Next, he asked to see my passport. "Passport?!" I shouted, "I didn't even know I'd left the country. I thought the closest I'd been to visiting distant lands was playing **Mindcraft**'s *The Keys to Maramon*, an action/adventure which will be unlike *The Magic Candle*, but set in a portion of the same game universe."

He pulled out his notepad and began to scribble. "So," he continued, "you admit you are a spy?" I denied this, but he flashed some papers with the General Electric logo on them, which he had earlier confiscated from me, and said, "You arrive with no passport, have papers connected with a defense contractor in your pocket, and hide your face in a paper bag. Yet, you deny that you are a spy."

"I'm not. Those papers simply indicate that **Kesmai Corporation** and **GEnie** (General Electric Information Network) have signed a contract to put an on-line version of *Harpoon* on the network by the latter portion of 1990."

"And these customs papers?" he fairly snarled as he tightened the noose of my impromptu interrogation.

"Just research," I protested. "I was trying to find out exactly how many cartridges of **Nintendo**'s 'Christmas hit' were still left in Seattle. Some guy told me they still had 2 million copies of *Dragon Warriors* which didn't sell in. Another guy said that **K-Mart** still had a million bucks worth of video game inventory *after* Christmas. I just thought it might indicate that the videogame market was softening faster than people thought."

He pulled another paper from his pocket. "Perhaps," he ventured with a threatening tone, "you will leave such investigations to the video game magazines in the future. We were just working on your death certificate, but we can't make up our minds: either you committed suicide or you were shot trying to escape." He deftly shot me with his pistol, but I don't remember the bullet hitting . . .
(To be continued).

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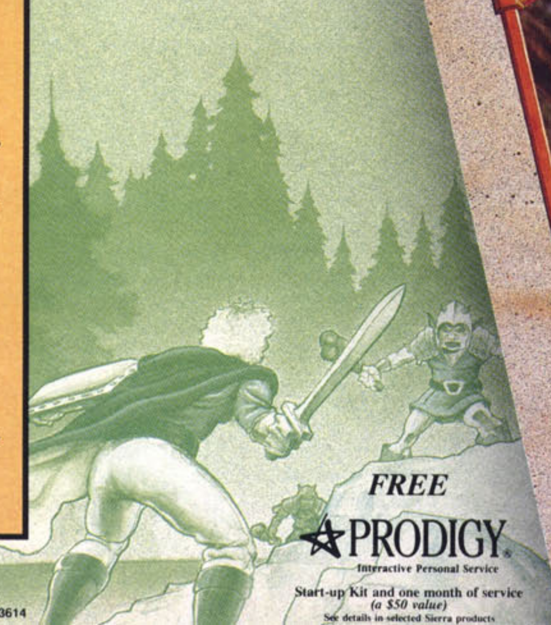
'...much of the humor is a great deal more subtle...the sub thing brought me right out of my chair.'

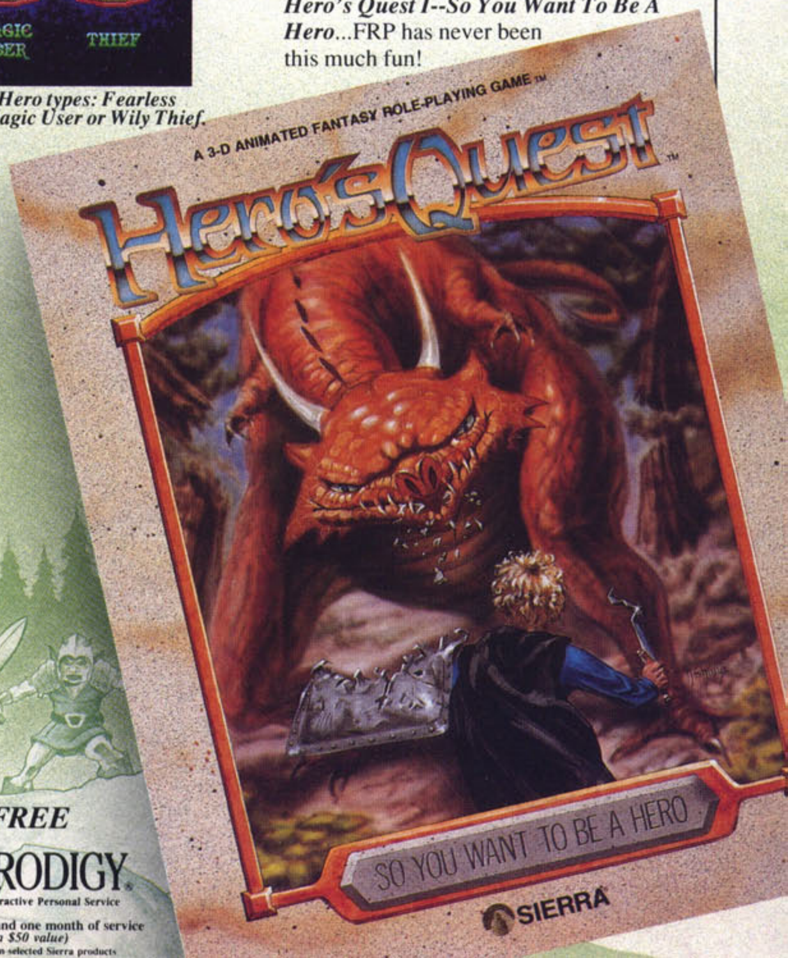
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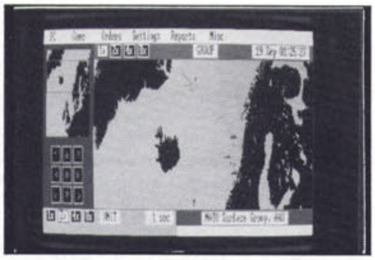
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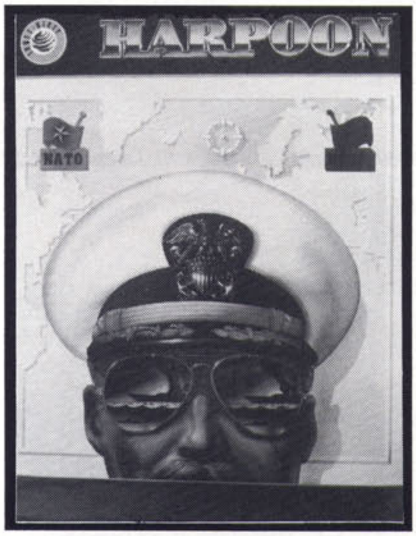
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HARPOON

by
M. Evan Brooks





TITLE:	Harpoon
SYSTEM:	IBM-AT (640K)
SOUND SUPPORT:	AdLib, CMS/Game Blaster, Covox Sound Master, and Innovation
# PLAYERS:	Solitaire
PRICE:	$59.95
PUBLISHER:	Three-Sixty Pacific Campbell, CA

No Whaling Simulation

Based on Larry Bond's award-winning miniatures/boardgame simulation of contemporary naval operations, *Harpoon* has a distinguished, albeit convoluted, lineage. Mr. Bond's rules system served initially as a database for Tom Clancy's novel *Hunt for Red October* (later converted to a computer game), as a basis for the novel *Red Storm Rising* (written by Tom Clancy and Larry Bond, and later converted to a computer game), and now, after a wait of almost three (3) years, *Harpoon* itself transitions to the electronic medium.

The product itself is so comprehensive and detailed that an in-depth discussion as to optimized multi-platform usage (naval terminology refers to individual units as platforms, i.e. surface ships, submarines, airplanes) will appear in a future issue. But there is no question that *Harpoon* is the most detailed simulation to appear in the civilian marketplace. This reviewer learned more from his first six (6) hours of playing *Harpoon* than he did in a one-year seminar of "Maritime Operations" in the Naval War College.

Harpoon itself consists of the Master Program which includes the GIUK (Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom) BattleSet (with twelve scenarios). Additional battlesets (scenario disks) are slated for release, with BattleSet #2 (North Atlantic Convoy) set for release by the time this article is published. BattleSet #3 will cover Mediterranean operations, while BattleSet #4 is tentatively set for Persian Gulf operations. Each BattleSet will consists of approximately fifteen scenarios, with a base price of $30.

With the size/complexity of *Harpoon*, various bugs have arisen, but **Three-Sixty** has taken the high road and any registered user will receive the free revision. In addition, the revision disks will include additional scenarios. Thus, users are encouraged to register (please note on the registration card the particular format—3.5 or 5.25).

Everything You Always Wanted To Know . . .

The documentation consists of three manuals: (1) "Operations Manual" by Lance Bernard. (2) "Tactical Guide" by Larry Bond; (3) "Aboard the Marshal Ustinov & Otlichy" by Tom Clancy;)

Mr. Clancy's contribution is a rough-draft "after action" report of his visit to two Soviet vessels; it offers no real insight to *Harpoon* other than to add color. Mr. Bond's guide notes that the scenarios are not "play-balanced", but rather estimates of actual operations as they might exist. The "Tactical Guide" itself is an overview of naval operations, very reminiscent of what this reviewer received in his first "Maritime Operations" seminar. The various types of naval warfare are covered: ASUW (Anti-SUrface Warfare), AAW (Anti-Air Warfare), ASW (Anti-Submarine Warfare), Strike (attacks by naval assets against land targets), Amphibious (projection of troop strength against enemy land masses, i.e. invasions/landings) and Mine (*Harpoon* does not directly address mine warfare, although BattleSet #2 may well cover this important if often neglected aspect of naval operations). Although the Tactical Guide gives the user a comprehension of the "Big Picture", it does not yield any guidelines as to efficient use of one's platforms in a multi-threat environment—this requires player experience and learning.

Mr. Bernard's Operations Manual is the *res gestae* of the documentation. Play mechanics and a short tutorial yield a basic understanding of game play. However, the manual is somewhat akin to a sex manual—it goes through the motions, but does not really put it all together. There are numerous terms which are unexplained in the text, although most of these are defined in the appendix. Some game screens are somewhat cryptic, with the documentation failing to elucidate the ramifications thereof. Replete with spelling and grammatical errors, the documentation presumes that one has an understanding of contemporary naval platforms and operations. Such an understanding may be gained via play, but the learning curve may be somewhat longer than desired.

The presumption of prior knowledge may be partially attributable to the long development time of *Harpoon* and the use of knowledgeable Navy personnel as beta testers. This is not to say that *Harpoon* is unplayable, but rather to state that one must acquire a familiarity with platform employment in the multi-threat environment.

Much of the "hard data" is not in the documentation, but encapsulated within the program as "pull-down" menus. These offer a fascinating picture of over one hundred (100) platforms, with additional details as to arcs of fire, sensors, etc. The smart user will avail himself of this data. It is essential in order to deter-

Continued on page 15



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The Witch of Orleans

Broderbund's Joan of Arc: Siege and The Sword"

by Chris Lombardi

God smiled upon the English, or so it had seemed. For nearly 100 years, the English had led campaign after successful campaign on French soil: trouncing the French in every major engagement; capturing the northern half of their land; subjecting them to merciless taxation; and becoming wealthy at the hands of broken peasants. Claiming their king's right to the French throne and boasting of divine support, the English were intent on establishing a medieval Franco-English state.

In 1423 the English began another campaign in France, led by the Duke of Bedford. Over the next several years, armies under Bedford would again defeat the Dauphinists, capturing scores of towns in central France. When two French dukes, Philip of Burgundy and Jean of Brittany, gave their allegiance to the English crown, it seemed the end was near for Dauphinist France. By 1428, Bedford was ready to capture Orleans, one of the Dauphinist strongholds, and planning to use it as a base from which the English could strike into the heart of the Dauphinist territory. With a pitifully small army of 6,000, Bedford began the siege of the Orleans, figuring that the Dauphinists would never be able to raise a force large enough to threaten him. The English never counted on a 17 year old shepherdess leading 4,000 men to march into Orleans and relieve the siege. In doing so, this young girl proved the English were not invincible; reclaimed the divine support the English had claimed; and revived the spirit of a broken France. The teen-aged sheep herder was, of course, Jeanne d'Arc.

Joan of Arc: Siege and the Sword (*Joan*) puts you in the shoes of Charles IV of France in 1428. Two of your dukes have turned against you; Bedford is besieging one of your last strongholds; your treasury is empty; your court is both corrupt and inept; and your people are both war-ravaged and demoralized. Your only hope is Joan's "miracle" army, with which you must subdue the rebellious French dukes and throw the English out of your land.

At first glance, *Joan* looks a lot like a *Defender of the Crown* clone. Actually, *Joan* is similar to the **Cinemaware** product in that the player's goal is to raise armies and systematically conquer provinces, but *Joan* is also a much more detailed simulation which offers the full

TITLE:	Joan of Arc: Siege and The Sword
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, IBM
PRICE:	$44.95
DESIGNERS:	The CHIP Group Carlo Perconti Rob Martyn
PUBLISHER:	Broderbund Software San Rafael, CA



powers of a medieval monarch to the player: taxation, justice, diplomacy, and even the underhanded aspects of espionage (assassination and kidnapping).

From battle and murder, and from difficult action sequences, Good Lord, deliver us.

At the onset, however, these monarchial prerogatives are unavailable to the player and they will remain so until the player relieves the siege at Orleans and undergoes, as a result, his coronation in the city of Reims. In *Joan*, cities are captured by means of siege warfare and this, in turn, consists of two action sequences. In the first sequence, the player must maneuver his soldier across a bridge, while fighting off the hordes of defenders that issue from the castle and avoiding the arrows that fall randomly from above. The three action controls are: "run forward", "hack overhead", or "hack sideways". Fortunately, the sequence is quite easy to master. The easiest way to succeed is simply to run up to a defender and start hacking, continuing to hold down the attack button until the defender pauses in his attack and, hence, either loses his head or arm. It is certainly nice and gory: heads roll, arms flop to the ground, and bodies pile up. In spite of the carnage, though, the sequence is so simple it quickly becomes tedious.

The second step in the siege involves one of the most frustrating action sequences ever to be played. The player must maneuver a soldier up the side of a bastion while defenders stand atop the wall, throwing rocks and pouring boiling oil on top of him. The player must either put up his shield to block a rock or jump to another ladder. Nothing can be done about the hot oil. Players can anticipate the rocks, but there is no way to predict when the defenders will pour oil and there is no way to avoid it. It is frustrating when you work so hard at blocking rocks and working your man to the top, only to have an unforeseeable gush of oil send him screaming to his death (accompanied by a sickening thud). Meanwhile, for every man you lose, your army is proportionately depleted. I have watched others play and talked to others who have played *Joan* and I have yet to meet anyone who is not unduly frustrated by this sequence.

Give me my steeled coat, I'll fight for France!"

While attempting to accomplish the initial objectives of capturing Orleans and Reims, the player will run into an enemy army or two. Thus, initiating a battle. The battle sequences in *Joan* are reminiscent of the *Ancient Art of War* system. The player views the battlefield from the side, with *his* forces on the left and the enemy's on the right. Using a push-button interface, players command their mortar and archers to fire, their foot-soldiers to advance and retreat, and their cavalry to charge. The system is very simple, but allows no room for tactical maneuvers. Beyond firing your arrows and mortar accurately, there is not much the player can do to sway the course of a battle. Since there is nowhere to go but forward, the two armies eventually clash head-on and it becomes a war of attrition. The side with the most men usually wins.

The computer opponent for these battle sequences is lousy. The computer *never* uses its archers effectively. In most battles the computer will send its archers along with the foot soldiers in the main charge. In this manner, the archers hardly fire and, if they do, they shoot aimlessly off the battlefield or back onto their own mortar. The computer also seems to have problems with its cavalry. Either the unit charges pell-mell through your troops and off the screen or it sits there impotently until you start pounding it with arrows or mortar. It is clear that little effort was put into fine tuning the artificial intelligence routines that handle this segment of the game.

After fulfilling the initial objectives (it will take several starts), all of the royal op-

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HARPOON

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mine the optimal offensive-defensive tactics. This information cannot be printed out or reduced to hard copy, but since the game-time "pauses" while one is accessing the information, no harm is done. This reviewer would have preferred an additional option of seeing a "split screen" between NATO and Soviet platforms as to get a visual contrast, but one rapidly learns the details. Alternatively, one could acquire the boardgame version of *Harpoon*. This would provide hardcopy data of all necessary platforms, weapons, and sensors (albeit, this is a $20 purchase).

A four-page errata/supplement has been included, which raises an interesting question. Since *Harpoon* is a "living" product, one which will grow and expand, why wasn't the documentation loosely-bound with a three-hole type of arrangement. This would have facilitated easy replacement of pages and kept the manual as a coherent entity.

"Real Men" Don't Use Stylized Icons

Harpoon runs best in an EGA-mode. The graphics are composed of three main screens -- strategic, group and unit (in effect, strategic, operational and tactical). Most of one's play will be involved in the group mode. After all, one is simulating a fleet commander and not the captain of a single vessel.

The graphics are crisp and varied. One may utilize grid lines on maps, range circles for various platforms (sensor ranges, air ranges, missile ranges, etc.), and icons depicting the actual vessels. Two icon sets are available: stylized (a ship/aircraft icon) or CDS (Combat Designation System). While the former is more "user-friendly" to the novice, the latter (representing actual NATO-type symbology) yields a better "feel".

The graphics are not akin to the tactical portrayals in **Lucasfilm**'s *Strike Fleet*, nor are they intended to be. Rather than a flashy view from the bridge, one gets the data that an FWC (Force Weapons Coordinator) would receive in the CIC (Combat Information Center).

Missile launches and strikes are graphically depicted and illustrate the direction of launch. Ship sinkings are accompanied by appropriate music (Soviet national anthem for NATO sinkings and NATO themes, e.g. *Peer Gynt* for Norwegian, for Soviet losses). If one tires of these renditions, they may be turned off. Overall, the graphics give a proper perspective and mood to the simulation.

Be The First With The Most

As noted previously, *Harpoon* is a simulation. Captain Hughes' classic treatise "Fleet Tactics" notes that the most important element of naval warfare is to "Attack Effectively First"; *Harpoon* justly emphasizes this aspect of naval warfare. Generally, Soviet missile ranges exceed those of NATO, while Soviet sensors are much less advanced; this leads to a "cat-and-mouse" game of seeking to avoid or make contact and achieve the much-vaunted first strike capability at sea.

After scenario selection, one may choose his side, possible nuclear release, snorkeling submarines, realistic weather, maintenance failures, and full ordinance. Weather can thereby play an important role, with the sea state ranging from smooth as glass to "feeding the seagulls".

No matter how lonely one feels at sea, the simulation provides a staff assistant who offers timely suggestions (e.g. do you want to turn your radar on active now?) and can handle the details via staff notes(One simply types in a reminder message which tells the Staff Assistant to query at the designated time).

In addition to the plethora of game options which detail various aspects of one's forces (sensor/weaponry/platforms), there is also a formation editor. This appears as a concentric circle pie with one's vessels and aircraft employed in formation. One may have to experiment in order to achieve a better use of formations, but this is essential to game play. The "Maritime Operations" midterm examination at the Naval War College demands that the student do a proper allocation of a task force—both in terms of vessel and commander placements. The formation editor asks the same. The chord slice of a particular vessel may be enlarged or reduced. This allows one to personally tailor his coverage. But be aware that when the task force may be cruising at 18 knots, a particular vessel may be reaching speeds of 25 knots in order to achieve its ordered station. This accounts for why many users have been confused as to why there is a difference between group and individual speeds.

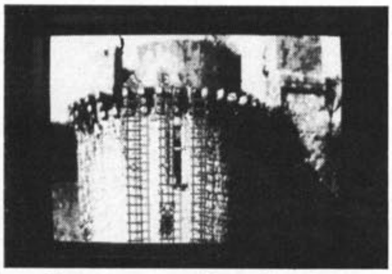
Sensors are always in a passive mode; one must elect when and how to "go active". Experience is the most effective teacher as to sensor usage, although it can be difficult to determine the optimal speed for best sonar results.

A future article will cover tactical employment in more depth. However, Scenario 1 involves a group of Soviet missile boats (Nanutchka IIIs) against a Norwegian force (four Storm PT-type boats and a heavier Leander and Oslo vessel). Details of these ships may be accessed via win-

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tions become available and the player is allowed to pursue the goal of uniting his country. The main game screen is a map of France, divided into the major provinces. Clicking on a province will show the major cities and any fortresses in that province. Capturing the cities (and thus, the province) is the key to winning.



Naturally, cities are either taken by siege or by buying them back from the enemy that holds it. Both methods require money and funds are raised several ways. The primary mode of income is taxation, the king's best friend. As king, you have the right to a yearly hearth tax from all your provinces (though provinces may also be taxed individually at any time). However, taxation beyond the hearth tax will lower the province's "Trust in the King's Power" rating. Generally taxation does not yield enough to field a decent campaign army, so players may resort to the medieval form of extortion. After defeating an army, there is a good chance of capturing the army's leader, and these leaders can often be ransomed back to the enemy king for large amounts of money.

... all the king's men, couldn't put France back together again."

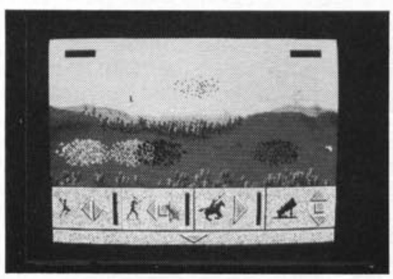
One of the nicest elements of *Joan* is the use of non-player characters in each leader's court. Initially, the player's court consists of 12 characters, including: Joan of Arc, the Renault of Chartres, and others. Each courtier is rated in the categories of politics, strategy, and army leadership. The player uses these characters as heads of armies and as negotiators between kings.

Whenever making diplomatic negotiations for an alliance, a peace treaty, an armistice, or the release/ransom of a prisoner, the player must first choose two negotiators from the court, as well as the location for the negotiations. Both choices can have an effect upon the outcome of the talks.

The player has six other characters to call upon to deal with the "other side of kingship", the dirty work. These characters, such as Vivianne the Mad, and Robert the Devil can be hired to poison, assassinate, kidnap enemy characters, to perform espionage missions, or report on the military situation of a province or town. Whenever the player wishes to perform one of these unbecoming acts, he chooses the character to do it and the amount of pay the character will receive. Higher rates of pay increases the chance of success, but players will quickly learn that some characters are simply not suited for some acts and would not succeed if you gave them the entire treasury.

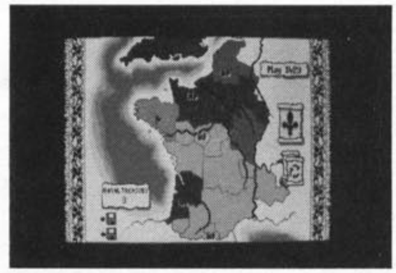
As king, the player also has the right to mete out justice. Under the justice menu, the player can execute a prisoner, arrest a member of the court, or grant a pardon to the same. Execution can be useful when a very strong enemy character has been captured, and the player does not want to deal with him anymore. Of course, such a strong character could bring a healthy ransom, and players must remember that the enemy leaders will not take it too well if you decapitate their top men. Though I've never seen the enemy leaders return the favor, I have had several negotiators imprisoned in retaliation of an execution. Players can also arrest and execute members of their own court, though after playing several games of Joan, I've never yet found any reason to do so. The power is there if players wish to play the Queen of Hearts.

Justice is also used when a province revolts. Each province has a "Trust in the King" value, and if that value falls below a limit the province will revolt, rendering



it untaxable. To solve the problem the player may wish to execute the leaders of the dissenting province, which usually put the province back on good behavior. There are other 'kinder, gentler' ways of restoring this trust value, such has signing a peace treaty, building a fortress in the province, or being victorious in battle.

Success at the game is a matter of keeping enough money in the coffers to support an army to recapture cities, and then mastering the siege and siege defense action sequences. While the number of diplomatic options outlined above seems to offer a wide range of possibilities for the player, the game suffers as a whole from imbalance of play. For while the diplomacy aspects add flavor, the action sequences are the meat of the stew. Global success lies not in whether the player executes this character or pardons another, but whether he has mastered the action sequences or not. And it is not only the centrality of these sequences but the number of them. In one game, I counted over 30 siege defense and over 30 siege sequences. Since sieges are actually composed of two action sequences, that comes to over 100 sequences. They are simply *not* stimulating enough to endure that many occurrences. After a while, they become tedious, increasing their already frustrating quality.



There are a few problems of note with the game system. One lies in the routines for controlling the actions of the enemy armies. If players negotiate a peace treaty, all enemy armies will stop immediately wherever they are and begin to build up troops at an incredible rate, even in one of the player's own provinces. In one game, after six months of peace, three enemy armies had amassed 100,000 thousand men! The most we could ever afford to field was 25,000. When the armistice ended, the three armies tore through France and I was powerless to stop it. Quite a major quirk!

Another qualm I have with the game is the way it tries to maintain historical events. Occasionally, in the course of the game, a window will pop-up providing a little historical tidbit. That's great. But several times, in keeping with the historical occurrences, the game will eliminate one of your characters. At one point, Joan is kidnapped, tried and executed, as it really happened. Again, that's fine if the intent is to maintain historical accuracy, but if Joan happens to be leading an army at the time she is kidnapped, the player ends up losing the entire army. This also happens with the warrior general, Xaintrailles. It seems silly that the designers were such sticklers on some historical events that they put the player at a disadvantage, when they fudge on other historical facts. (ex. The Duke of Bedford, one of Henry's top men in the game, was actually killed in the siege of Orleans).

Joan has potential to be quite a good game. Despite my complaints, I did enjoy some aspects of it. It has a wonderful setting, a nice 'look and feel', and elements that truly capture the spirit of the historical period, but the prevalence and nature of the action sequences, along with the quirks in AI and design, keep it from being "all that it could be" and prevent one from offering a wholehearted recommendation.

Main Battle-Tank: Central-Germany

by William Bulley



TITLE:	Main Battle Tank: Central Germany
SYSTEMS:	Apple II, Atari ST, and IBM
PRICE:	$60.00
DESIGNERS:	Steven Newberg and Stephen St. John
PUBLISHER:	Simulations Canada Bridgewater, Nova Scotia CANADA

The past twenty years have seen another revolution in the conduct of conventional warfare. The increased lethality of modern weapons has combined with simultaneous improvements in both the means of command and control, as well as the technology of disrupting those means. As a result, the manner in which current and future mechanized operations are conducted will be significantly altered.

The main protagonists in this situation, NATO and the Warsaw Pact, have each developed their own doctrines in order to try to adapt to the above situation. Traditionally, Pact forces are considered to have opted for a system based on more rigid control than is seen in the West. Only a simplistic view, however, fails to take into account the latitude and initiative allowed Soviet officers within doctrinal bounds. It is incorrect to think of these officer as automatons. On the other hand, NATO (specifically the U.S. Army and the *Bundeswehr*) has developed its own operational concepts in order to deal with the situation. In the U.S. Army, the result is "AirLand Battle", a doctrine stressing agility, initiative, depth (of the battle area) and synchronization (of all arms and elements). Whether our leaders' cognitive and leadership skills can measure up to the demands imposed by this doctrine is open to question. *Main Battle Tank: Central Germany* is presented as a study of command in this setting.

Intelligence Report (Game System)

In **SimCan**'s system, players are forced to assume the role of a commander with all the attendant problems of control in a situation filled with the fog of war. In this game, the player is either a battalion or brigade/regiment leader. Orders are communicated to subordinate maneuver, artillery, attack helicopter, and close air support units. In some scenarios, staff and supply components are available. In all scenarios, a player may elect to limit the number of orders available in order to simulate the inability of the command level staff to process more than a certain amount of communications.

One of the first problems facing a player deals with establishing unit doctrine. This relates primarily to a unit's reporting frequency (how often a unit reports to HQ) and to its characteristics in combat. Players should beware of unnecessary reporting, however, because it tends to draw indirect fire. On the other hand, infrequent reports will lead to lack of control due to a paucity of information. Therein lies the rub in modern operations and some of the problems in the game relate to this point.

A welcome new feature in *Main Battle Tank: Central Germany* is the program's capacity for performing a "postmortem" of the game. This can take the form of either simply listing the commands given on each side or providing a compendium of the combats which caused losses. In addition, the movements and fates of units can be graphed on the computer screen. The "postmortem" is a vital tool in evaluating player performance. This feature becomes especially important in a command-oriented game. Fog of war is so intense in **SimCan** games that use of the "postmortem" is extremely interesting and instructive in assisting the player in finding out the fate of lost friendly units and discovering the actual results of attacks on opposing formations.

Disposition (Critical Notes)

Main Battle Tank: Central Germany represents a significant departure in terms of modeling mechanized battles. It is intended to place the player in the situation of a commander; that is, one who is forced to make decisions based on mission priorities and using incom-

Continued on page 19

Scorpion's Tale

Leisure Suit Larry III

As Told By Scorpia



Warning: Although "The Scorpion's Tale" is a warm and comfortable tavern of the mind with a nice cozy fire of vibrant images, our resident storyteller conjures up illuminating hints about games. If the gentle reader eschews hints, let him beware!

Baby, it's cold outside! In fact, this has been one of the coldest winters we've had in awhile. So, mosey on up to the fire, while Fred prepares a little something to help take the chill off. This is the time to think of warm places . . . the islands . . . sun . . . sand . . . surf . . . sex . . . (grin) . . .

Leisure Suit Larry 3: (LSL3) picks up where the previous game left off, although several years have passed in the meantime. Larry, who seemed to have found true love and a decent life at last, is about to experience several rude shocks that will send him back on the "make out" circuit with a vengeance.

This game is also much more explicitly sexual than "Looking For Love", which was mainly farcical in tone and content. Sex is the dominant theme in *LSL3*, and there is plenty of it, as Larry rolls in the hay with five different women. Anyone who considers such antics offensive or repulsive will probably want to avoid the game.

In an interesting departure from standard adventure fare, the action switches at the mid-point from Larry to Patti. During the first half of the game, you guide Larry through his various make-out maneuvers. During the second half, you guide Patti in her attempts to find Larry, who has run off into the bamboo jungle.

This division is sharper than it may first seem. The Larry portion is somewhat open-ended, so if you miss or overlook something, going back to get it is not much of a problem. The Patti portion, however, is *strictly* linear in design. If you don't have all the items you need, your only option is to restore the game, because you can't go back. The trek through the jungles is strictly one-way.

Decked out in island togs, our hero starts the game at a point overlooking the island. Larry meditates placidly on the changes and events since his defeat of the nefarious Dr. Nonookie. He is married to a beautiful woman; lives in a plush home; and has a comfortable job with Natives Inc., which controls all development on Nontoonyt Island. Surely this is all a dream-come-true for our former lounge lizard.

However, as Larry is about to discover, some dreams are nightmares. After poking (and peeking, very much peeking!) around the lookout, Larry strolls home and suddenly, all is not so serene any more.

In fact, Larry has just been kicked out of hearth and home. Kalalau (his ex) has left him (well, actually she's staying, but he's leaving) for another woman. That's right, woman. Larry's prowess in the bedroom seems to have declined over the years.

Crushed, Larry wanders off and finds his way to Natives Inc. The news here is no better, as Chairman Kenneth (Kalalau's father) informs Larry that he no longer has a job, either.

Wifeless, penniless, homeless—does our boy give up? Not on your life! Now that the preliminaries have been taken care of, it's time to get down to some serious business (making out with as many women as possible in the shortest possible time).

This is a good place to save the game and map out the area. It is not large. The outdoors is a mere fifteen screens total. The only thing to be careful of is the fact that several screens have different exits in the same direction. For instance, the middle right exit of one screen will take you to the casino, while the one in the upper right takes you to Chip'n'Dale's.

An important point to keep in mind, by the way, is to return occasionally to places you have been before (except Natives Inc.). Sometimes, things change while you've been gone. It also helps to pick up whatever you find during your explorations . . . you never know what might come in handy in the future!

Once everything has been mapped, it is time to reflect on what you've seen. For instance, there's the lovely Tawni, sunbathing semi-nude on the beach. Definitely a candidate for Larry's surefire techniques. Or she *would* be, if she wasn't so interested in buying souvenirs.

That's something to remember for later. Right now, Larry has other things on his mind (and we have no doubts about what that is, either!). However, Tawni's not about to give anything away for free. Considering her acquisitive nature, there's really only one thing to offer in return for sampling her charms.

Unfortunately, in the middle of this "sampling", there are some interruptions. Get used to that, because there will be many more yet to come. A vendor shows up and captures Tawni's interest with a genuine ginsu knife. At least, the interruption is brief.

The same can't be said for the sand crabs, who put an end to Larry's romantic interlude permanently. Oh well, at least he managed to hang on to the knife, dull though it is. It might be worthwhile to sharpen it, if Larry can find the right spot (which isn't all that far away).

Maybe he'll have better luck with Cherri Tart (hey, blame Al

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Main Battle Tank

Continued from page 17

plete information. It nicely illustrates the frustrating constraints on communication that exist in any combat situation. In addition, the vital importance of the synchronization of the effects of modern weapons can be illustrated. This is where some problems in the simulation become evident and the present writer will attempt to express these in terms of "AirLand Battle" concepts.

As mentioned earlier, the main tenets of "AirLand Battle" are the qualities of agility, initiative, synchronization and depth. These terms are not just verbiage, but are concepts that are supposed to be applied at the lowest practical tactical level. In *Main Battle Tank: Central Germany*, the player has all of the tools available in order to apply "AirLand Battle" doctrine. The problem is that units simply have a very hard time working toward any unified goal in a coordinated way. Artillery batteries can be dedicated to individual maneuver companies, but beyond that, local initiative and the ability to synchronize firing is lacking. Protective firing, company-directed air support and engineer-constructed obstacles are absent. Further, synchronized offensive and retrograde operations are nearly impossible, due to the very cumbersome limitations involved.

For example, it is not possible to use routine control measures in preparation for an attack. These would include coordinated movement to a line of departure from an assembly point in conjunction with pre-planned firing upon objectives and masking fire as needed. Instead, movement to the assembly area must be done under "Move" or "Advance" orders. Even then, a whole new set of "Attack" orders must be given whenever the opportunity arises, which imposes an unrealistic and dangerous delay. Additionally, planned firing can be disrupted by any intervening fire support requests. If possible, it would be nice if some unit orders regarding intermediate objectives could be time sensitive in order to enable units to execute coordinated attacks and movements. An alternative would be to allow successive advance and attack orders to be given at the same time along with the appropriate temporal constraints.

The game's depiction of artillery does not reflect reality in some ways. No matter which side one plays, offensive fire *must* be requested through the highest HQ of either side, except when artillery units are placed in direct support of individual companies. In reality, NATO fire missions often originate from forward observers in artillery units which are attached to line companies. This arrangement gives small units great combat power and, at the same time, increases the flexibility of available artillery assets. Soviet units try to do the same thing by having artillery formations both accompany maneuver units and perform direct fires in support of those organizations. No matter which side one plays, the game uses a method which most closely models a stereotypical Soviet unit where all firing is coordinated through and allocated by higher HQs. In actual practice, NATO regards the inefficiency and lack of flexibility in the Soviet system as a major advantage for themselves. In the game, a player does *not* have a choice.

Finally, one must be frustrated with the setting for the game. The background for this modern campaign is a hilly part of Germany in NOVEMBER! Instead of having a game which illustrates the capabilities of modern weapons, players tend to find themselves in the middle of meeting engagements with visibility down to nil due to snowstorms. The depiction of the effects of weapons would be instructive, but a game which does not try to show the consequences of the employment of modern units in realistic conditions misses the mark. Night operations are another matter. It would be nice to see this explored with variable start times for scenarios.

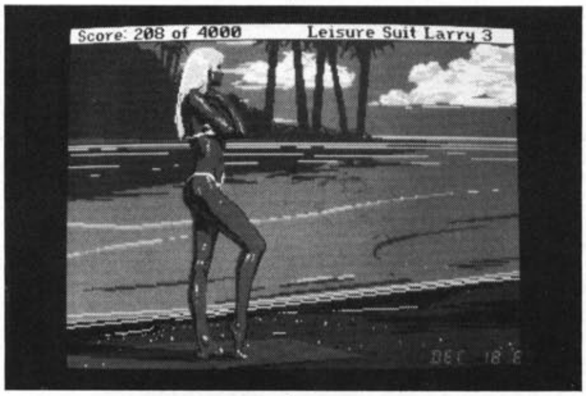
So, what is left is a game in which operational directives to subordinate organizations must be laboriously spelled out. This seriously deprives those components of the agility and initiative which is expected of NATO forces. Artillery and airpower can be used to influence the deep battle, but, from a practical standpoint, only electronic measures can be used for target acquisition. The player assigns helicopters to terrain objectives, but the player cannot otherwise impose doctrinal constraints upon them. With rare exceptions, indirect fire requests originate from battalion or brigade headquarters. This centralizes command and control at the expense of responsiveness. While the above description would usually apply to the operational concept of a Warsaw Pact unit, in the game, both sides labor under the same constraints. Many sources believe that Pact operational technique is better thought out than NATO's. Does the game mean to imply that SimCan agrees? More likely, the programming constraints too limited to reflect the uncertainty that is generated by demanding subordinate units to simultaneously take risks while exercising sound assessment skills (the algorithms would be incredible!).

As usual, **SimCan** provides a useful mirror in modeling military realities, as painful as those often may be. It superbly illustrates many problems of command in a modern environment. No one can tell exactly how well it does its job, because the only thing we know that would *definitely* occur in the battles depicted in *MBT: CG* would be the generation of a colossal amount of destruction and confusion. In spite of the design constraints noted above, *Main Battle Tank: Central Germany* is a quality game.

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Lowe for these names!), appearing nightly in the casino's show room. Getting in to see the show would be a good start. This may trip some people up, because you actually have an item that doesn't show in the inventory . . . check out the booklet that comes with the game.

However, the Maitre D' wants a little cash up front, too, and you don't have a dime. So, how many people have you seen handing out money? Right! Now, all you need is a little ingenuity, and Larry will soon be carving a path to success, provided he also remembers to skirt the issue.



The show isn't much (awwww), but afterwards, Larry has his opportunity with Cherri. She wants a little something up front as well. If Larry pays attention to what she says, her needs will become abundantly clear. Luckily, Larry can satisfy them . . . after a visit to the lawyer.

And while he's there, he might as well ask about a divorce . . . if Kalalau can do it, so can he. All it takes is a mere $500 and Larry will *really* be a free man. By the way, did you notice that the lawyer is a woman? Too bad you can't ask her for a date . . . but perhaps there are other ways of getting what you (or Larry) want.

Right now, though, Larry has pastry on his mind, so it's best to hustle back to Cherri. Give her what she wants and, in no time at all, it's backstage for a little taste. That's about all Larry will get, too, as the next show starts in the middle of the action.

Oops! Larry better get dressed in a hurry. Too bad his sense of touch isn't what it used to be (or maybe never was in the first place). How he manages to squeeze into Cherri's costume is a mystery, but there he is, feathers and all, right on stage in front of everyone (say, y'know, he looks kinda' cute like that). Better shake it, Larry . . . the crowd is getting restless!

After this embarrassing (but rewarding) episode, Larry should be in pretty good shape, having enjoyed (at least to some degree) three women (oh, did you miss Suzi? Tch! And I gave you a big clue to that, too!). Now that he's had some practice, maybe he's up for Passionate Patti, known (in more ways than one!) throughout the island.

Patti, however, is a tough proposition (grin), being more demanding than any of the others. She wants her men to be single (well, the divorce should take care of that). She also likes her men to be in good shape, and that potbelly of Larry's is a definite turn-off. Looks like a trip to Fat City is in order here.

What's that, you say? You're not a member? Fie! Didn't you look at everything that came into your hot little hands? No? For shame! Restore and be more careful this time.

At Fat City, you come across Bambi, the aerobics instructor. While Patti is your ultimate goal, there's nothing that says you can't take out a little time to help her with her video (a last fling, as it were). You need to be in shape for her, too, so you might as well head for the locker room. Oh, by the way, do you have a towel? No? Better go find one . . . you've seen it somewhere already.

The only problem with the locker room is that all the lockers look very much alike. How do you know which one to go to or what the combination is when you find it? Well, where would you write down all the pertinent information?

Working out is simple, and you don't need any hints for that (one of the few really straightforward things in the game). After a quick shower, you're ready for Bambi, and after that, Patti.

Well, almost ready for Patti. Now, she wants a present. Perhaps you can find a little something to lay on her. Fresh, mind you. And then, there's the liquor! Patti enjoys a nip before bed. There aren't too many places where liquor might be served, so check 'em out and you should find what you need. Then, it's up to the penthouse and, at last, some uninterrupted (and satisfying) love-making.

Only, at the end of it, Larry misinterprets Patti's murmured "Arnold", and runs off to the jungle. Now comes the switch, as Patti awakes to find herself alone in the room, with no sign of Larry anywhere. After a quick trip to the terrace and a look through the telescope (or binoculars), she knows where he's gone and it's time for Patti to track down her man.

Take everything you can from the penthouse. This is crucial. Once she's been through the jungle, Patti won't be able to come back here, so make sure she has everything before she leaves. Patti should be fully dressed when she steps into the elevator.

While Patti won't need much money, she will need *some* and it ought to be pretty obvious where to get it (after all, it's hers). On the way out with the money, stop and look around carefully. There is an item here that is critical. If you miss it, you will scream loudly and in anguish later, because it is needed near the very end and you'll have to restore and go through everything a second time. You really don't want to do that.

On the way to the jungle, stop off at Chip'n'Dale's, which is now open. Our friend the Maitre D' is there, but you know how to handle him. Enjoy the show, and have a chat with Dale after (I'm sure you can think of a couple of ways to get his attention . . . remember his act). You can't, alas, make out with him, but you may get some helpful information.

Now it's jungle time. The bamboo forest is nasty. Patti will need a water supply to survive (and don't drink it too soon, either!). There are two ways to get through: easy and hard. The hard way is to map it out yourself. I don't recommend this, unless cartography is the joy of your life. The easy way is to get the directions from the booklet, if you're in tune with the author. Then, it's just a matter of following through (20 screens worth!) until you're out.

On the other side, the locale is more restricted. In fact, there doesn't seem to be any way to go . . . except down the side of the cliff. Bet Patti never thought she'd be doing this sort of climbing (grin). Well, there's nothing for it but to try going down (heh). Check her inventory. She has something useful. Then, all she has to do is get across the chasm (which is a lot wider than it appears to be).

There isn't much to work with here, but it's enough. Can you think of another name for marijuana? (Those are marijuana plants growing there, a relic from the days of Dr. Nonookie) And don't overlook the coconut trees . . . they're important, too. Now, all Patti needs is a little extra support, since rope-climbing over a chasm is not something she does every day (or any day but this one). Aren't short hemlines in again this year?

Whew! She made it over safely! Too bad the rope comes untied . . . but then she wouldn't want to try that sort of thing again, anyhow. Up ahead is another obstacle, the dangerous Feral Pig.

Continued on page 31







BEAUTY IS ONLY SKIN DEEP, BUT SPACE GOES ON FOREVER.

This is the bumper sticker I slapped on my starship. But I'm the captain, so who says I can't make a statement to my fellow merchants? Besides, it's true. In the vastness of space, there's plenty of room for genuine ugliness. I run into *lots* of aliens — spineless blobs like the Spemin, bizarro mystic broccoli like the Tandelou — that make me shudder and reach for the nearest can of industrial-strength pesticide.

So why do I do it? So I can cop an intellectual toaster and slice and dice some phantom in the nebula? Do I give a flying fungus?

I guess I really do. The planet Arth needs fuel and technology to withstand a Spemin *blob-literation.* So rather than vegetate before the T.V., I talk to vegetables in space and trade with bug-eyed aliens that resemble the hairy mold growing in the shower. And I remind myself: Life is no beauty pageant.



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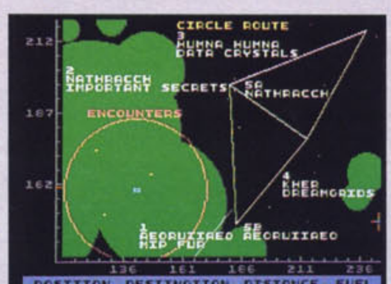


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TANK

by M. Evan Brooks

LTC (USAR) Mark Evan Brooks graduated the Armor Officer Advanced Course in 1977.



NAME:	TANK
SYSTEM:	IBM (640K req.)
# PLAYERS:	1-2
PRICE:	$59.95
DESIGNER:	R. Anton Widjaja Gilman Louie Steve Perrin
PUBLISHER:	Spectrum Holobyte Alameda, CA

Introduction

TANK is the latest product in the armor simulation inventory; it is **Spectrum Holobyte**'s initial entry into what is described as the "Electronic Battlefield System". During 1990, Spectrum plans to release additional simulations/modules which can interact with *TANK* (proposed subjects include A-10 [close air support], AH-64/Advanced Tactical Helicopter [helicopter/gunship], an upgrade of *Falcon* [with more aircraft included], and Infantry [including the M2/M3]). The "EBS" will be capable of modem-play and anticipates on-line marketability on a **GEnie/CompuServe** type network in the near future. Since *TANK* has been released shortly after **Microprose**'s *M1 Tank Platoon*, this article will offer both a review and a comparison.

Documentation

The documentation is reminiscent of an army field manual in that both illustrations and prose have been deliberately styled in order to reflect the tenor of military manuals. However, while the documentation adequately delineates the actual mechanics of play, it does *not* describe armor and/or OPFOR (opposing force) doctrine. Thus, the user must develop his own doctrine.

Microprose's *M1 Tank Platoon* manual devoted over half of the documentation to a study of armor tactics and employment; *TANK* leaves this for the user to discern on his own. Important tactics are cursorily mentioned and, unless one has some familiarity with the employment of armor, a long learning curve may result. Play mechanics are easily learned, but proper techniques are much more difficult to assimilate. Hull-down is mentioned briefly in the manual, but it is essential to remember that use of hull-down and reducing one's vulnerability is invariably a key to battlefield survivability.

The manual is modified by a supplement (Volume 1), a "Last Minute Additions" (a supplement to the supplement) and a recent modification (a supplement to the supplement to the supplement?). Most of the additions are minor, but occasionally, one may become temporarily confused. Finally, a two (2) page keyboard layout is available for the function keys, commander and outside views, and gunner and driver. This reviewer prefers the "Microprose" keyboard *overlay* as being more user-friendly, but this is a matter of personal preference and some users have remarked that they feel TANK is easier to learn.

Graphics

The graphics are very well done. The internal instrumentation is very accurately portrayed. The viewpoint is somewhat first-person modified. When one switches to the driver position, he may discern the arms and feet of the driver. Similar views are present for the commander and gunner—sort of semi-physical astral projection where Shirley McLaine would feel right at home. The tanks are well-drawn, while the strategic view utilizes military iconography.

Again, similar to the Microprose armor simulation, one can shift internally between driver, gunner and tank commander and among each of one's tanks. However, the scale is somewhat expanded, and one may exercise direct control of more than one platoon. An outside, trailer ("chase tank") and drone view (which allows reconnaissance of the battlefield in a very smooth scrolling fashion) are included. The drone reconnaissance view is not available at higher levels of expertise, since it would reveal enemy concentrations; however, it should be utilized when learning the game, since it proves invaluable as an intelligence tool.

TANK offers five scenarios in each of three environments: Fort Knox (training), Central Europe (Fulda Gap region) and Middle East (Israel-Syria-Lebanon). The geographic environments are accurate renditions of actual terrain. The "strategic" map is a pixilated rendition, but the zoom feature allows one to expand the view until eventually one can zoom down to three-dimensional space. This is extremely well done and is one of the strengths of the program.

In more advanced settings, the zoom does not resolve to a full three-dimensional setting, since this would allow the player to "cheat" and learn where the OPFOR is located. The zoom and memory usage mandates, at least, a 286-type machine for *TANK* (which is noted both on the box cover and in the documentation).

Buildings are rendered in detail. When firing the machine gun, one can watch the shell casings spew out of the gun. The main gunsight picture is very clear, and hits on enemy tanks cause various degrees of damage (from minor pieces flying off to smoke/flames to the commander's cupola literally flying into the air as an enemy vehicle is reduced to slag). The explosions are bit-mapped and quite entertaining, although in this reviewer's opinion they are somewhat too fleeting. Spectrum attributes this to the intensive use of memory that a more durable explosion/smoke would require and the requirements for memory use elsewhere in the program.

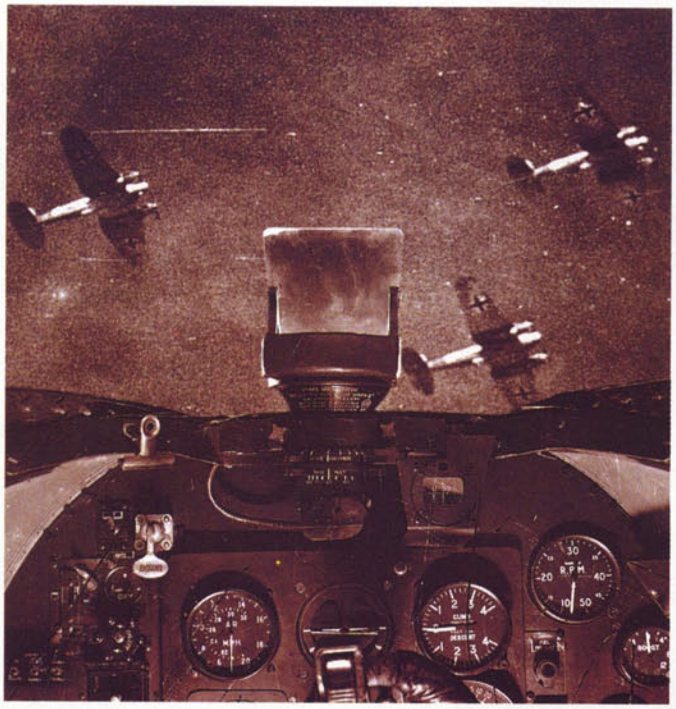
Terrain and slope are rendered in different colors. While admittedly artificial, it does allow the user to gain a rapid appreciation of the degree of slope and is much appreciated. This allows optimum use of favorable terrain and an opportunity to deass from the "beaten zone". Overall, the graphics of *TANK* are extremely well done.

Game Play

TANK may be installed on a hard drive. There is no protection scheme. Joystick/keyboard selection is done when beginning a scenario. One may also select time (day/night), players (1-2) or level (beginner-intermediate-advanced). The scenarios build on one another, and one can move from a single tank to command of a battalion minus.

OPFOR is generic. While his tactics may improve somewhat at higher levels, there

Continued on page 62





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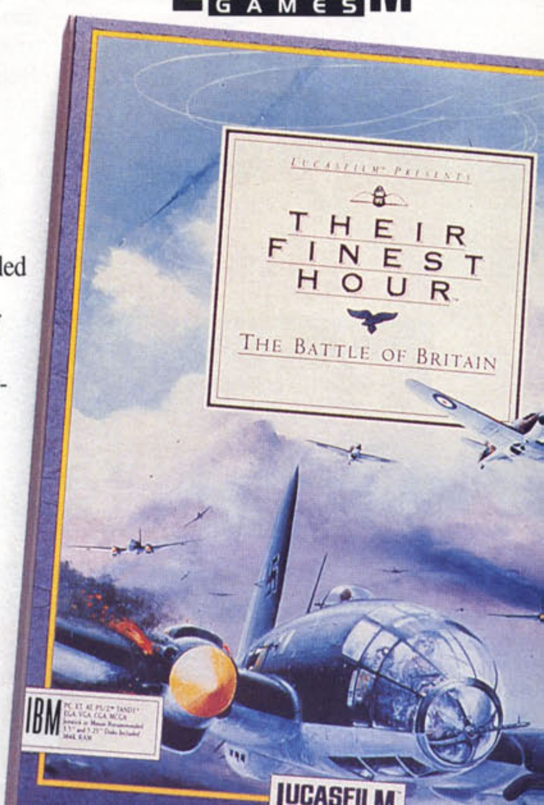


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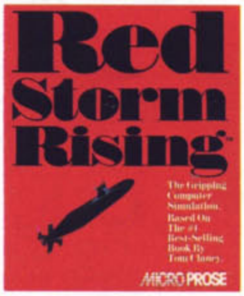
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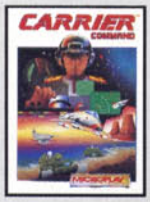
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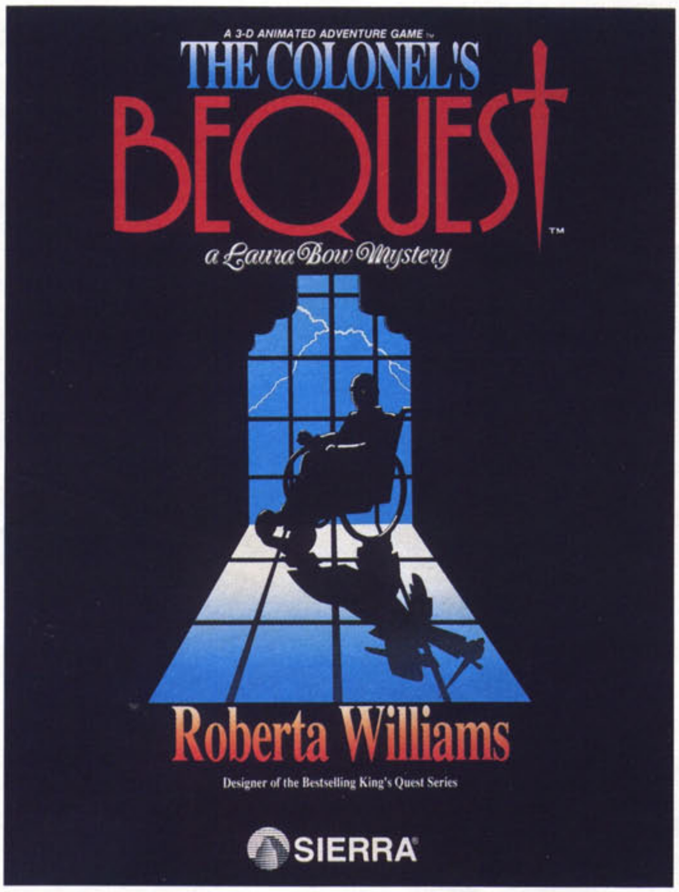
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Manse Macabre

Sierra's "The Colonel's Bequest"

by Johnny L. Wilson



TITLE:	The Colonel's Bequest
SYSTEM:	IBM (Amiga, Atari ST and Mac soon)
PRICE:	$59.95
DESIGNER:	Robert Williams
PUBLISHER:	Sierra Coarsegold, CA

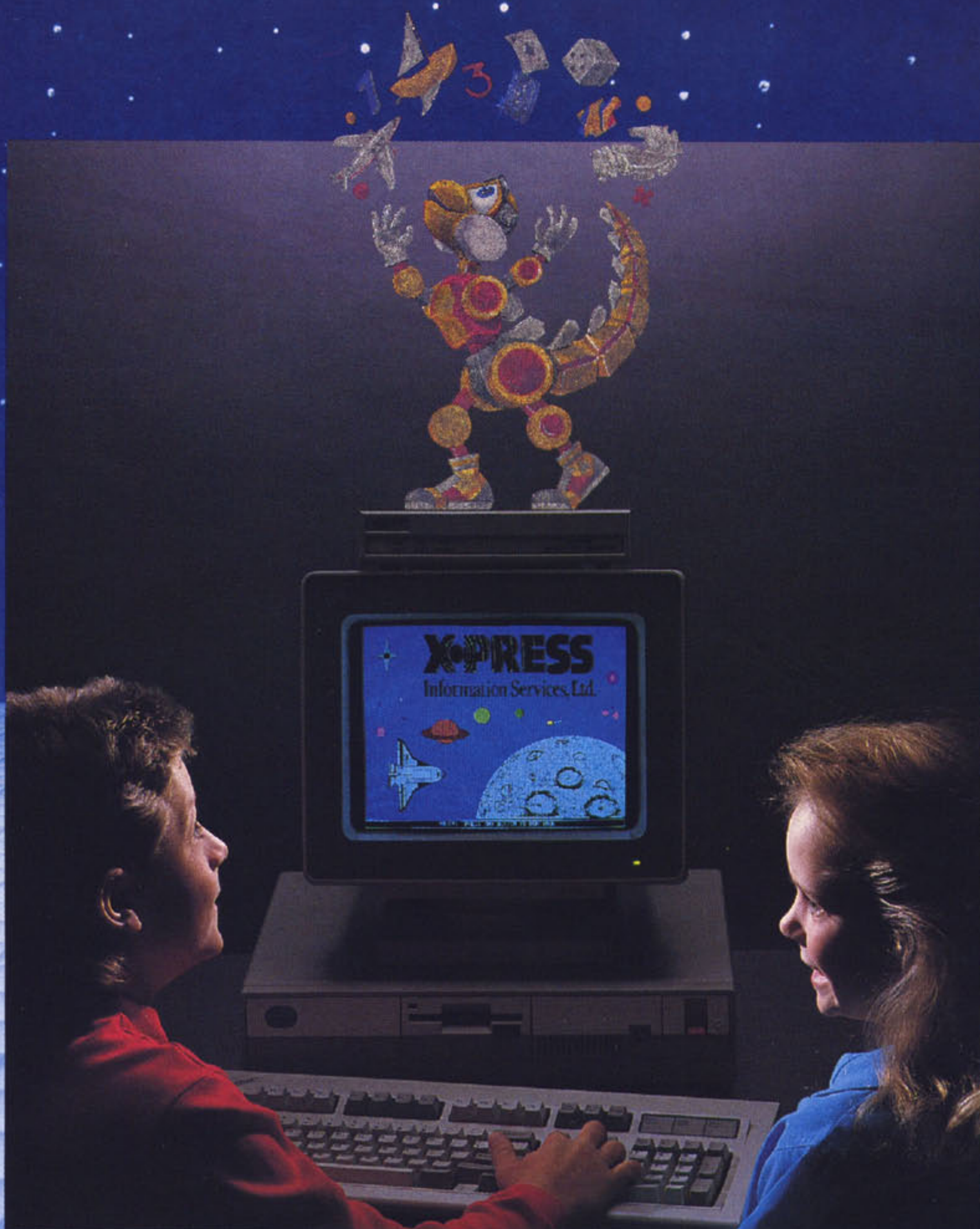
When *CGW* first talked to Roberta Williams about *The Colonel's Bequest*, she cautioned us that the game was somewhat different than her previous hits. We wondered how it was different, especially since *Mystery House* (her first game) was also something of a cross between Agatha Christie's *Ten Little Indians* and the game of *Clue*.

Roberta: *First off, it's the first Roberta Williams' design to use outside beta testers. I don't particularly like for people to see my games before they're complete. Fortunately, some of the beta testers tell us that it's really frightening. Some quit playing it at night because they kept looking over their shoulders. Also, it's more story-based than puzzle-based. It's more of a suspenseful gothic story. As the main character, you're caught in a situation. One of the things Ken and I want to do is move toward interactive stories as opposed to simply designing adventure games. The idea is making people feel like they're actually there as opposed to simply trying to solve puzzles.*

Much of the intent behind *The Colonel's Bequest (TCB)* has been realized. This will undoubtedly be a mixed blessing for **Sierra**. Hard-core adventure gamers (i.e. inveterate puzzle-solvers) will be disappointed because the "game" is too easy and there are not enough puzzles to be solved. Compared to most adventure games in general (and other **Sierra** games in particular) where adventurers must scrutinize every locale and manipulate every possible object, *TCB* may seem empty and shallow. Laura Bow, the protagonist who is directly controlled by the player, cannot "Get the trombone" because she is not musically inclined. She cannot play billiards because she doesn't know how. She cannot play a record on the Victrola because they are not her records (yet, she can play the player piano). All the restrictions could drive the traditional adventure gamer absolutely mad.

Yet, *The Colonel's Bequest* succeeds on its own terms. One reason for the restrictive limitations is incredibly obvious. After all, the game takes up ten 5.25" disks or four 3.5" disks as it is. Imagine how much data would be required to make all of these items "active". A more significant reason for the limitations is that they are irrelevant. The plot is *not* puzzle-driven. It is conversation-, time- and observation-driven. It is often more important to hear that bit of a key conversation than it is to open that dresser

Continued on page 28



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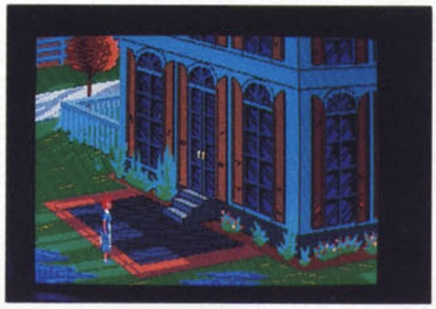
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Laura Bow poses beside the main gate of Colonel Dijon's estate.



It may be too creepy for the average adventurer to venture outside, but Laura isn't afraid.



Why is the "good" doctor reading a racing magazine in the library?



What is it that Rudy and Gloria don't want Laura to overhear?



Don't just stand there, Laura. Get back inside where it's "safe"!



What happens if you scratch Beauregard behind the ears?

drawer; to be behind that picture on the wall at the right time than to try to get that exotic weapon; or notice who is reading what than to try to get Dr. W. C. Feels' medical bag. After all, even the scoring system is handled differently in *TCB* than in other Sierra games.

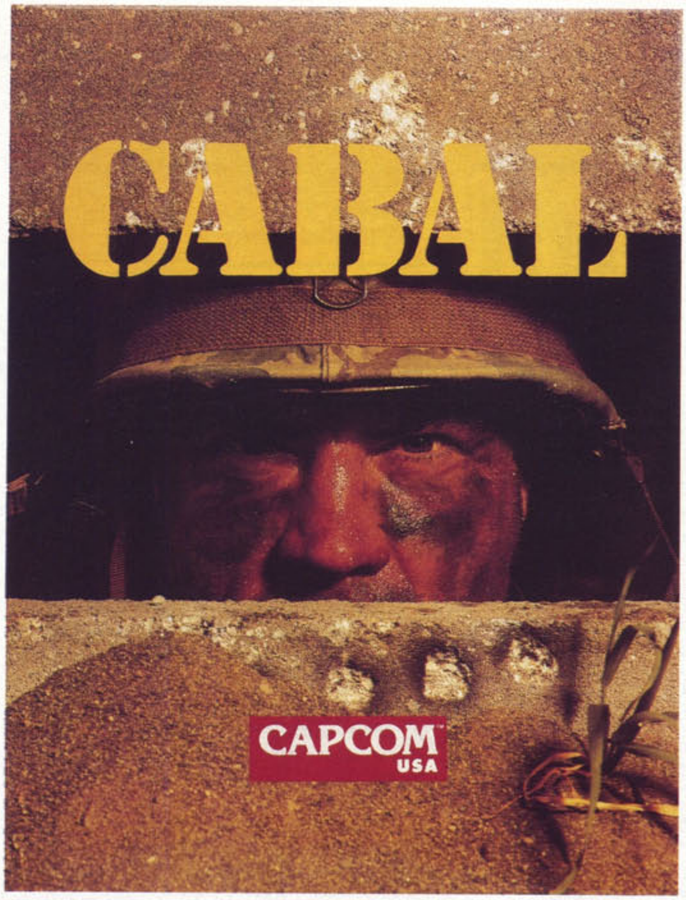
Roberta: TCB *is like an interactive PLAY. When we first started designing it, we designed it in acts. It originally had eight acts from which we expanded the plot. The way the story is carried forward is that there are certain things which must be accomplished in each act. We call them "Must Do"s. Puzzles are extras. In reality, you don't need to solve a single puzzle in order to complete the game. There is no scoring system in the game. Players gauge their progress in the wrap-up by means of a notebook which rates them on their detective skills. You have more fun if you find the attic, spy on people, and notice that the decanter has disappeared, but you don't have to. We hope this product will help bridge the gap and take gamers away from the cushion of needing a score to see how well they do. It's experimental to a degree, a real departure for us.*

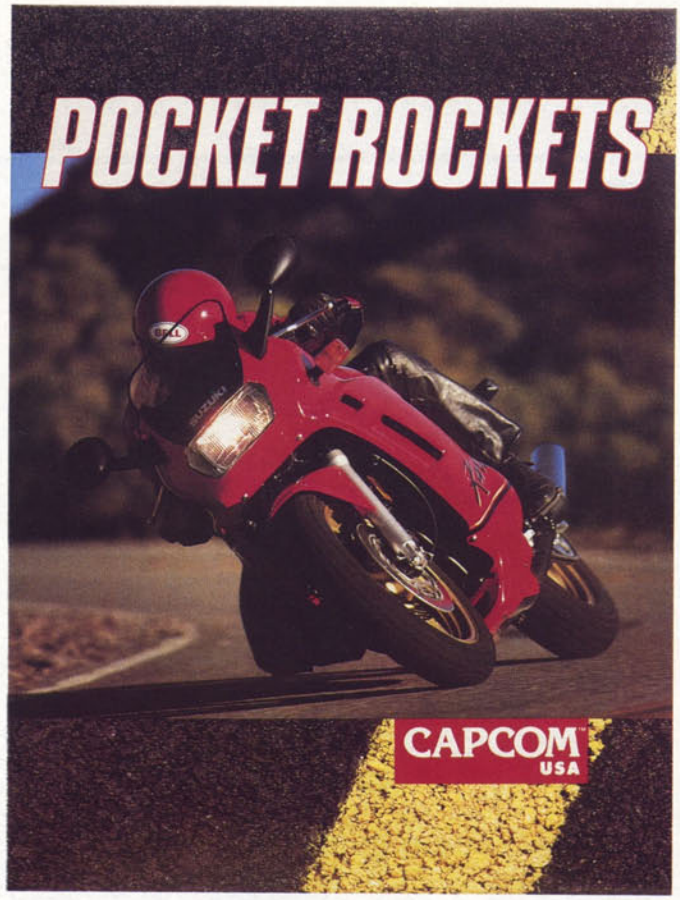
As an interactive play, *TCB* is extremely interesting. Players encounter the theatrical roots of the game from the very beginning. The first time the player views a "performance" of *The Colonel's Bequest* (as the game itself refers to each "playing"), he/she is treated to cinematic credits which segueway into a pre-game "curtain call" where the cast of characters is introduced. This sequence is followed by more film-style credits and scene cuts, leading up to the dining room scene. Like all the other interior scenes, the dining room offers the feeling of a stage set. The "fourth wall" is down, the player/audience observes from the proscenium and there is no ceiling. The artists have succeeded in suggesting a stage play through the way they "cut away" the architecture of the house.

Speaking of set design, Roberta informed *CGW* that she spent some time in New Orleans in order to get as much atmosphere and historical authenticity as was possible. She pored over floor plans of antebellum mansions, looked up ghost stories related to the bayou country and visited museums and plantation houses. In earlier games, she used to draw a sketch of each room/location. In *TCB*, she gave the artists a floor plan, lots of pictures of old plantation houses and allowed them more freedom. Later, they talked out problems like creating somber pictures by utilizing a 16-colored palette (the artists eventually dithered the colors to achieve the atmosphere Roberta wanted). The artistic touches are also evident in the conversation boxes which display the characters' lines. Their early 20th century look is reminiscent of both silent film "dialogue" and vaudeville stage placards.

TCB also retains its theatrical roots in terms of characterization. Like the melodramas which were popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the characters in *TCB* tend to use "acting gimmicks" like accents and reveal obvious character flaws in order to establish themselves in the audience's (or in this case, the player's) mind. The cast includes an alcoholic, a gambling womanizer, an apparent shyster, an alleged quack, a sexy French maid, a black cook with a background in voodoo, the aspiring movie queen, a butler almost

Continued on page 32





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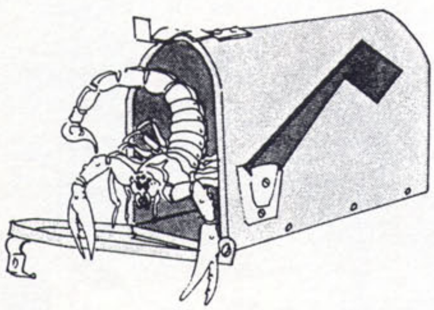
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Scorpion's Mail

As Told By Scorpia







Well, it's time for another peek into the mail sacks here in the back room. I know it's a little crowded (and will get more so), but I just hate to throw letters away. It's amazing the amount of mail that accumulates after 6+ years, eh?

Anyway, before we get started here, I'd like to remind folks (and set some minds at ease) about this column. The Mail is a bi-monthly feature, appearing in February, April, June, August, October, and December (that's one way to make the year go fast!). I mention this because a few people have asked why it wasn't in a particular issue. Don't worry, you didn't miss anything. And now, on to the mail.

Might & Magic II: Some folks have penetrated to the center of the Dead Zone with interesting, if unpleasant, results. The safe way is to remember Nature's Day (among other things). Also, there have been queries about returning to the present after messing around in the past. Resting will do it, but sometimes not immediately. You may have to rest several times before you're pulled "back to the future". Just keep at it, and you'll get there.

Dragon Wars: Yes, questions about this game are starting to show up. People are having problems breathing at the Sunken Ruins. That's because they haven't had a chat with the Queen of the Underworld, yet. Another elusive matter is that of the magic boots. Well, you don't get something for nothing. A helping hand (or spell) will go a long way towards obtaining the desired item.

Battletech: A number of letters have come in about finding the hidden mech cache. It is not on the mainland . . . nor is it at all visible on the screen. You'll just have to walk around until you come across it; there's no other way.

Ultima V: Several people are experiencing difficulties with the bottom level of Dungeon Deceit. This one is a little tricky. You may want to pay closer attention to the torches on the wall and experiment a little with this and that. In a short time, you should be getting those monster cubicles open (just what you wanted, right?). By the way, everything will be closed up again when you come back (yes, the level resets when you leave). There is a trigger on the ladder side, but you may just want to go up a different dungeon on the return trip, especially if you don't want to fight your way through again.

Wasteland: This game continues in popularity (and questions). The Sleeper Base vault (the one with the blue wall inside) shows up frequently. First, you need a certain Secpass to open the door. This pass is not found in the Base itself; you'll have to look elsewhere for it. Second, after you get the vault open, you have to do something about the wall inside. There is no key to it, so other means are called for . . . violent ones (as well as persistence).

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure: Some folks are having a hard time with the plug in the catacombs. Actually, it's not as hard as it may seem. The real trick is to be standing in the right spot (right under the plug). The rest is almost automatic (well, if you have the right items, it is!). There have also been queries about the first of the three trials on the way to the grail. Anyone who has seen the movie knows what has to be done, and anyone who hasn't can probably figure it out pretty quickly on their own. The real problem is how and where. Read the diary (the hardcopy one that comes with the game) and look for an X. That should certainly give you some ideas.

Leisure Suit Larry 2: There are a few people out there with bikini problems. They seem to be missing half of it (tch! grin). Well, you should have the top part by the time you reach the island (if not, restore!). The way to find it is to get in over your head around the middle (I love obscure clues, hehe).

The Fool's Errand: This isn't a hint, but a recommendation. If you enjoy word games and puzzles, anagrams, word searches and the like, get this game! It came out several years ago for the Mac, and is finally available on the IBM. It is unique, original, and innovative, and one of the best games I've ever played. The multi-tiered puzzles, story depth, and overall design make this game a joy to behold (and a refreshing change of pace, too!). If you're looking for something really different, this is it!

Well, that's all for the mail this time around. If you need help with an adventure game, you can find out how to reach me by reading "The Scorpion's Tale" column in this issue (hehe). Until next time, happy adventuring!

Continued from page 20

Leisure Suit Larry

By this time, Patti doesn't have much of anything left. Still, what little there is should be enough (coconut trees, remember?).

Now comes the worst part of the game, an arcade sequence. Patti has to ride a log down the river, avoiding the various obstacles that appear in her path. It's mostly a matter of moving in the right direction at the right time. Save often as you make progress along the river, and good luck!

Past the river, our heroine's tribulations are not over. Before you can say "cookpot", she's captured by cannibal Amazons! Oh no! But wait . . . it's not all bad! At last, in a cage suspended over the cauldron, she is reunited with Larry!

Celebrations could be a bit premature, though, as a witchdoctor makes her appearance and the pot starts bubbling by magic. What to do? Well, maybe Patti has a little magic of her own. Anything is better than being boiled to death (we won't even think about what comes after that!).

So, as our loving couple makes good their escape from a fate worse than death, remember that if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways: On Delphi, visit the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu). On GEnie, stop by the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT). By US Mail (you must enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the United States): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring!

 CGW

Colonel

too reminiscent of Charles Adams' eccentric cartoon family and more.

This characterization is vital to the player, because most of what will happen in the story depends on interacting with the characters. Since conversation is important for both advancing and understanding the story, it might as well be interesting. Actually, Roberta was attempting to stretch the envelope in terms of character and has successfully taken a first step.

Roberta: *We wanted the characters to be semi-intelligent and have a distinct personality. In this game, you "talk" to the characters, but you can talk about objects, environments and other characters. Of course, this presented a problem because the question was, how much can you ask about? How far does it go, since it can go on forever? It was a real dilemma. So, for this game, we established an artificial pattern.*

In *The Colonel's Bequest*, players can have Laura ask about: the other characters in the cast (whether they are still among the living or not), any objects which could be moved (whether they have been or not), and locations. Of course, asking doesn't guarantee success. Each member of the "cast" has his or her own prejudices, their own limited knowledge, and their own pre-set attitude toward Laura. Their conversations will be predicated on these factors (and the underlying script).

Roberta has taken an intitial step in a direction that many other designers will probably take. Other designers are struggling with the definition and implementation of artificial personality. Since *persons* can change their attitudes, be affected by what is happening around them, and learn, there will likely be algorithms to allow such "artificial" personal growth in the future. There is no indication that this occurs in *TCB*, however. There is no hint of "reaction rolls" or keeping track of interaction. There may be some, but it is minimal. Just as the non-player politicians in *Hidden Agenda* offered somewhat, but not totally, disappointing because they did not "grow" as leaders and human beings, even so, one wishes the characters in *TCB* could move beyond the stereotypes. Still, one must remember that the stated purpose of the product was to create an interactive play. Since plays are almost universally scripted and, except for rare exceptions, actors almost always tied to that script, one should not carp too loudly about what the game did not accomplish in terms of artificial personality.

The script itself will probably come as something of a shock to those who think of Roberta as a weaver of fairy tales. Instead, *The Colonel's Bequest* is a patchwork quilt of bayou folklore, Agatha Christie, Alfred Hitchcock and Stephen King. Shadowy figures, secret passageways, insidious innuendo and horrific anticipation are all ingredients in *TCB*'s effective potion.

Roberta: *I've always wanted to do a scary adventure game. I've read Stephen King's* Danse Macabre, *really a textbook on horror writing. He said that people tend to go for the cheap cop-out in horror writing, that they get lazy and just go for the gore. He's even done that, but he said that gore isn't really scary. It's just a gross-out. He said that to be really scary is an art form. You don't show anything—you allude to it, build up to it, but you don't actually show it. I've tried to accomplish that feeling.*

Normally, the murders take place off stage in *TCB*, all the better to show shadowy villains escaping or menacing hands in the shadows. In "Act I" of *The Colonel's Request*, the present writer instructed Laura to perform a normal everyday activity. The scene shifted and the demure soft color display changed into silhouette. A knife came out of the blackness, blood spurted from the shapely silhouette, and streaks of blood were left on-screen after the deceased slumped to the floor. Those who play the game will readily recognize the scene from a famous horror film, but the point is that the shadowy scene is more disturbing than the same scene would have been in broad daylight.

Another lesson which Roberta seems to have learned well-from the masters of horror and suspense is the use of humor as "comic relief". At least, it was hard for this reviewer to keep a straight face when corpses kept disappearing and characters reacted to Laura's story about like Bud Abbott listened to Lou Costello when they "met" all those **Universal Pictures** monsters. It certainly didn't hurt to have an early reference to *Leisure Suit Larry* tied into one earthy location. One also has to admire those horrendous puns which kept appearing to greet every new demise Laura could be directed to experience. At one point, Laura had been sliced in two by this reviewer's persistent attempt to get a sharp-edged weapon for her (She won't need one until the endgame and even then, it won't be an "edged" weapon.). The program proceeded to transform Laura into a winged angel and ask if she had a "splitting headache". There are worse puns for the daring adventurer.

Music and sound effects also play a vital role in establishing the tone and atmosphere of horror/suspense. The soundtrack of *TCB* is more carefully integrated into the game itself than, for instance, that of *King's Quest IV*. *TCB* also uses more sound effects than the earlier title.

Roberta: *Because the composer of* KQ IV *was a Hollywood composer and they aren't used to scoring the film until the movie is almost complete, we had to have every detail thought out, complete with time segments, loops, etc. In* The Colonel's Bequest, *Ken Allen saw the game in development. He used his talent to determine what was needed in each scene. Then, later, we talked together about which scenes needed more, which needed something else included, etc.*

In summary, *The Colonel's Bequest* is the forerunner of one style of future entertainment software. Whether it is referenced as an interactive movie, play, adventure or story, it is a pioneer in a new style of computerized storytelling where the viewer/player/director has less burden of advancing the story than in the past. It is likely that many of the CD-ROM-based products of the future will build upon experimental products like *TCB*.

As an experimental product, *The Colonel's Bequest* has plenty to offer. It is a well-rounded entertainment experience with hours of exploratory play value. Where it falls short is in traditional terms of challenge, problem-solving and strategy. Dedicated puzzle-solvers will cry, "Pablum!" at the game's ease-of-use and automatic advancement of the storyline. Although it is certainly easier to say than to design, one hopes that future products will offer something of both worlds: stories that progress without complex puzzles and an alternative scoring system that could take advantage of complex puzzles within a sub-plot.

The bottom line, however, is that **Sierra** has forced gamers to shift their attention once again. In a product with plenty of color, "chrome" and sound, gamers will find both an entertaining story and a pleasant interaction. Roberta Williams has courageously and successfully broken out of the *King's Quest* mold. *The Colonel's Bequest* could well leave its own legacy in the world of computer entertainment.

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Entertainment Software "On The Pass Line"

New Computer Games at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show



The word in Las Vegas is that the computer folks at the Consumer Electronics Show and Comdex are not gamblers. That may or may not be true, but Las Vegas may be an appropriate place to hold the Winter Consumer Electronics Show, anyway. Entertainment software publishing has become such a gamble that there are two widely disparate opinions on the health of the industry. Just like the basic bet in "shooting craps" takes place on the "Pass Line" (betting *with* the shooter) and the "Don't Pass Line" (betting *against* the shooter), there are intelligent businessmen "betting" with and against disk-based entertainment software.

Watching Out For NESsie

To those who find themselves on the "Don't Pass Line" of the industry, disk-based entertainment has ceased to be viable as a mass market medium. They say it will always be a niche market, largely due to the success of the video game market. Chief among the "monsters" who have consigned computer games to this niche is the **Nintendo Entertainment System (NES)**.

Nintendo faces a year of significant challenges which reflect everything from a congressional subcommittee investigation to non-licensed cartridges from third-party developers (including **ShareData**'s violent *Chiller* cartridge, a horror game complete with exploding body parts, at an equally controversial $19.95). However, the bridge between NES and disk-based software seems to be turning into a two way street. Where once the only relationship (between NES games and disk-based games) was that the most successful Nintendo titles were translated into personal computer versions (often poor facsimiles of the original games), the market now supports Nintendo versions of computer games and computer versions of Nintendo games.

How does this affect the computer gamer? It affects us in two ways. The large revenue returning to the entertainment software industry through licensing agreements with **Nintendo of America**, **Sega**, and **NEC** licensees will help keep the disk-based side of the industry healthy and flexible. Second, the cross-fertilization between video games and computer games will necessitate advances such as those currently occurring with regard to interface, sound and storage.

The Screen Says It All (Interface)

Many designers believe that the popularity of action/adventures on the dedicated game machines, such as *Legend of Zelda* on the NES, is due to their accessibility. Gamers can simply insert the cartridge, turn the system on, and start playing without reading laborious documentation. Of course, designers of disk-based software have rightly suggested that these action/adventures were basically shallow and repetitive, but they began to realize that they could learn significant lessons from the interface concepts used in the game machines. "Whether it is conscious or sub-conscious," says Chris Roberts (*Times of Lore*), "interfaces and design are being affected by the video game market. What the Japanese market originally demanded were certain constraints which did not affect the depth and quality of a game." Without effective presentation, people will not even *look* at a game, much less play it.

Some computer role-playing designers have already incorporated some of these ideas. For example, **Interplay**'s *Dragon Wars* and Roberts' *Times of Lore* (**Origin**) were significantly influenced by products on dedicated systems. Now, there is a plethora of products designed with intuitive access in mind.

Origin is making a conscious effort at

Continued on page 38


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& Mark Baldwin
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Computer Gaming World's

See Reader Input Device on page 72

The Categories

Strategy (ST): Games that emphasize strategic planning and problem solving.

Simulation (SI): Games based on first person perspectives of real world environments.

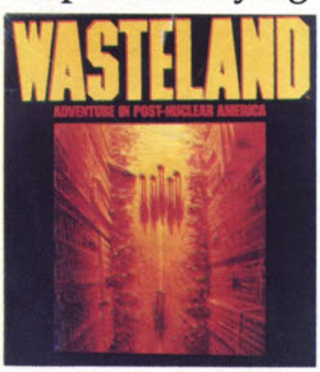
Adventure (AD): Games that allow you to take your alter ego through a storyline or series of events.

Role-Playing Adventures (RP): Adventure games that are based on character development (usually involving attributes).

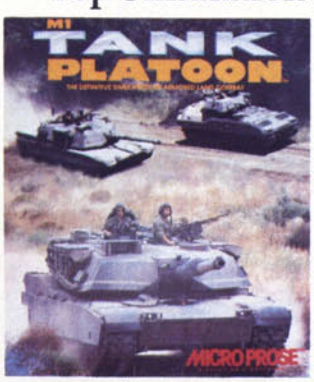
Wargames (WG): Simulations of historical or futuristic warfare from a command perspective.

Action/Arcade (AC): Computer games that emphasize hand-eye coordination and reflexes.

Top Role-Playing



Top Simulation



THE TOP TEN GAMES

No.	Name	Mfg.	Machine	Cat.	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
1.	*Their Finest Hour*	*LucasFilm*	*I*	*AC,SI*	*44*	*10.38*
2.	*M-1 Tank Platoon*	*MicProse*	*I*	*SI,WG*	*61*	*9.87*
3.	*SimCity*	*Maxis*	*Many*	*ST,SI*	*76*	*9.85*
4.	*F-19 Stealth Fighter*	*MicProse*	*I*	*SI*	*79*	*9.80*
5.	*Hero's Quest*	*Sierra*	*I*	*AD*	*27*	*9.61*
6.	*Chessmaster 2100*	*Toolwrks*	*Many*	*ST*	*28*	*9.43*
	MechWarrior	*Activision*	*I*	*SI,RP*	*40*	*9.43*
8.	*Populous*	*EA*	*Am,I,ST*	*ST*	*56*	*9.41*
9.	*Red Storm Rising*	*MicProse*	*C,I,ST*	*SI*	*62*	*9.25*
10.	*Battlehawks 1942*	*LucasFilm*	*Am,I,ST*	*AC,SI*	*79*	*9.20*

No.	Name	Mfg.	Machines	Cat.	Avg # Resp.	Rating
11.	Sword of Aragon	SSI	I	ST,WG	27	9.18
12.	Lords of Rising Sun	Cnmwre	Am	AC,ST	51	9.17
13.	Wasteland	EA	Ap,C,I	RP	114	9.09
14.	Ultima V	Origin	Ap,I	RP	99	9.07
15.	Dragon Wars	Interplay	Ap,C	RP	27	9.04
	Might & Magic II	NewWrld	Ap,C,I	RP	46	9.04
17.	Bard's Tale III	EA	Ap,C	RP	74	9.03
18.	Space Quest III	Sierra	Am,I,ST	AD	34	8.97
19.	Romance/3Kngdms	Koei	Am,I	ST,RP	31	8.96
20.	Indy: Adventure	LucasFilm	Am,I	AD	23	8.93
21.	Falcon	SpcHolo	Many	SI	62	8.90
22.	Mean Streets	Access	C,I	AD	28	8.89
23.	A-10 Tank Killer	Dynamix	I	SI	40	8.88
24.	NFL Challenge	XOR	I,M	ST	86	8.87
25.	Overrun	SSI	Ap,I	WG	25	8.85
26.	The Magic Candle	Mndcrft	Ap,C,I	RP	43	8.80
27.	Genghis Khan	Koei	I	ST,RP	32	8.79
	Project Stealth Ftr	MicProse	C	SI	29	8.79
29.	Battles of Napoleon	SSI	Ap,C	WG	30	8.77
	Battletech	Infocom	Am,I,ST	RP	48	8.77
	Fire Brigade	Panther	Am,I,M	WG	22	8.77
32.	Airborne Ranger	MicProse	C,I,ST	AC	74	8.76
33.	King's Quest IV	Sierra	Many	AD	58	8.75
34.	Neuromancer	Interplay	Ap,C,I	AD	33	8.70
35.	Pool of Radiance	SSI	Ap,C,I	RP	106	8.69
36.	Battlechess	Interplay	Am,I,ST	ST	58	8.68
37.	F-15 Strk Egle 2	MicProse	I	SI	54	8.67
.	Typhoon of Steel	SSI	Ap,C	WG	43	8.67
39.	Ballistyx	Psygns	Am,ST	AC	20	8.65
	Police Quest II	Sierra	I,GS,ST	AD	43	8.65
	Zany Golf	EA	Am,I,ST	AC	31	8.65
42.	Gretzky Hockey	Bethesda	Am,I	AC,ST	38	8.64
43.	Sword of Sodan	Discvry	Am,GS	AC	27	8.63
44.	Curse of Azure Bonds	SSI	Ap,C,I	RP	63	8.56
45.	Nobunaga's Ambition	Koei	I	ST,RP	51	8.53
46.	Carrier Command	Rainbird	Am,I,ST	AC,WG	49	8.51
	Panzer Strike	SSI	Ap,C	WG	68	8.51
48.	Silent Service	MicProse	Many	SI	257	8.50
49.	Hostage	Mndscpe	Am,I,ST	AC	28	8.47
50.	688 Attack Sub	EA	I	SI,ST	48	8.42
	Manhunter 2	Sierra	I,M,ST	AD	31	8.42
52.	TV Sports Football	Cnmwre	Am,I,ST	AC,ST	50	8.39
53.	Arkanoid	Dsc/Taito	Many	AC	69	8.38
	Wings of Fury	Brdbnd	Ap	AC	52	8.38
55.	Strike Fleet	EA	Ap,C,I	WG	79	8.37

THE HALL OF FAME

The Games In CGW's Hall Of Fame Have Been Highly Rated By Our Readers Over Time. They Are Worthy Of Play By All.

Bard's Tale I
Chessmaster
Dungeon Master
Earl Weaver Baseball
Empire
Gettysburg
Gunship
Kampfgruppe
Mech Brigade
Might & Magic
M.U.L.E.
Pirates
Starflight
Ultima III
Ultima IV
War in Russia
Wizardry

No.	Name	Mfg.	Machines	Cat.	Avg # Resp.	Rating
56.	Rocket Ranger	Cnmwre	Am,ST	AC,AD	75	8.32
57.	Modem Wars	EA	C,I	ST	24	8.29
58.	Manhunter	Sierra	Many	AD	72	8.25
59.	Police Quest	Sierra	Many	AD	98	8.23
60.	Starglider II	Rainbird	Am,I,ST	AC	65	8.22
61.	Jack Nicklaus' Golf	Acclde	Am,C,I	AC,ST	28	8.21
	Three Stooges	Cnmwre	Am,C,GS	AC	68	8.21
63.	Leisure Suit Lry II	Sierra	Many	AD	52	8.20
64.	Battlegroup	SSI	Ap,C	WG	36	8.19
65.	Abrams Battle Tank	EA	I	AC,SI	31	8.16
66.	Tetris	SpcHolo	Many	AC,ST	46	8.13
67.	Vette!	SpcHolo	I	AC	26	8.12
68.	Stealth Mission	Sublogic	C	SI	36	8.11
69.	Shiloh	SSI	Ap,C,I	WG	54	8.09
	Zork Series	Infocom	Many	AD	218	8.09
71.	Faery Tale Adventure	Micllsn	Many	RP	59	8.07
72.	Speedball	Cnmware	Many	AC	35	8.06
73.	Russia	SSG	Ap,C	WG	61	8.05
74.	Sentinel Worlds	EA	I	RP	71	8.04
	Techno-Cop	Epyx	C,ST	AC	23	8.04
76.	Test Drive II	Acclde	Am,C,I	AC	42	8.02
77.	WC Leader Board	Access	Many	AC,ST	97	8.00
78.	Leather Goddesses	Infocom	Many	AD	136	7.99
79.	Breach	Omntrnd	Many	ST,RP	114	7.98
80.	Enchanter	Infocom	Many	AD	115	7.97
81.	Jordan vs Bird	EA	C,I	AC	47	7.96
82.	Omega	Origin	Many	ST	49	7.92
	Prophecy	Activsn	Am,I	AD	32	7.92
84.	Wizardry V	Sir-Tech	Ap,I	RP	43	7.88
85.	White Death	ComndSim	Am,I	WG	20	7.87
86.	Eternal Dagger	SSI	Many	RP	72	7.85
87.	Lakers vs Celt	EA	I	AC	27	7.83
88.	Rommel	SSG	Ap,C	WG	20	7.80
89.	Anc Art of War At Sea	Brdbnd	I,M	ST	108	7.74
	Phantasie III	SSI	Many	RP	105	7.74
	Space Rogue	Origin	Many	AC,AD	31	7.74
92.	Phantasie	SSI	Many	RP	147	7.69
93.	Star Saga I	Mstrply	Many	AD	37	7.66
94.	War in Middle Earth	Melbrne	Many	ST	57	7.65
95.	Bard's Tale II	EA	Many	RP	166	7.64
96.	Grand Prix	Acclde	Am,I	AC	46	7.63
97.	Sorceror	Infocom	Many	AD	71	7.62
	Spellbreaker	Infocom	Many	AD	93	7.62
	Wizard's Crown	SSI	Many	RP	133	7.62
100.	Dec. Battles III	SSG	Ap,C,I	WG	23	7.57

Top Strategy



Top Action/Arcade



Top Adventure



Top Wargame



Winter C.E.S.

Continued from page 34

this with their current lead titles: *Ultima VI: The False Prophet* (a fitting and socially significant conclusion to the current *Ultima* trilogy) and *Bad Blood*, Chris Roberts' post-holocaust CRPG using the *Times of Lore* interface and offering a story with much more depth and detail (both titles will debut on the IBM, with simplified C-64 versions to follow). Both games are mouse-driven with a simplified command structure (players click on the command, then click on the direct object for the command to act upon).

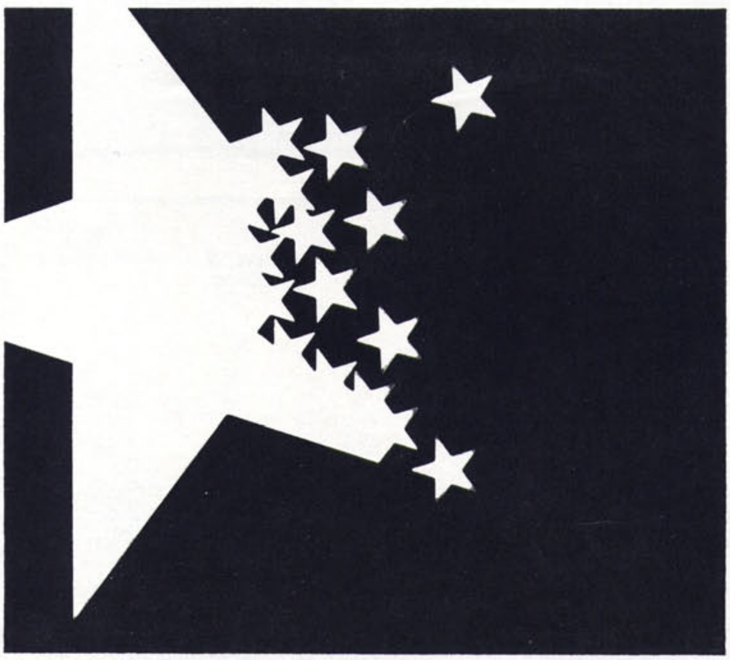
This does not mean that *Ultima VI* will be more simplistic than its predecessors, however. For example, every object "exists" in the fantasy world. Objects have weight (and apply to weight limits), attributes (including hit points), and uses. Unlike its "ancestors", the game is in a constant scale and real-time game time is an important aspect. Also, the personalities of the non-player characters are more developed and real-world modeling is more pronounced. To illustrate the latter, players can actually buy wheat from an NPC farmer, mill it at a mill, take it to a baker, get bread and have money left over. Hence, setting up their own businesses.

Mindcraft's *The Keys to Maranon* is a CRPG/action game (Spring Release, initially on the IBM) which is menu-driven by keyboard or joystick, offers considerable role-playing detail (conversations, research, weapon wear and tear, etc.) and a style of combat which is handled similarly (in both graphics and action) to the Melee sequences in *Sword of the Samurai*.

Later this year, **ShareData** plans to market *Married With Children* as part of their **Monarch** line of premium products. It is, a graphic adventure (with outstanding VGA graphics) based on the television series and using a command interface designed to be, in producer Chris Erhart's words, "As simple as **Lucasfilm**'s *Maniac Mansion*, so the player can direct the characters as easily as Peg manipulates Al's wallet."

Data East unveiled the first two offerings in its *Draconian* line, *Drakkhen* and *Chamber of the Sci-Mutant Priestess* (Amiga, Atari ST and IBM). Both games are being developed by **Infogrames**, the French developer which brought us **Mindscape**'s *Captain Blood*. The icons used to navigate through both games are graphically attractive and the entire command structure is designed to be intuitive.

Accolade's *Day of the Viper* is an action/adventure (First Quarter on Amiga, Atari ST and IBM) which offers several user-friendly features. The game uses icons similar to those in *Breach* or *Paladin*, but it also features automapping, auto-note-taking (a computer function called the object management system, OMS, which keeps track of everything players encounter like a computerized secretary would, making game play more efficient) and storage boxes (mini-windows) stretched across the top of the screen to indicate inventory.



Circuit's Edge is a graphic adventure from **Infocom** that is distinctive in subject matter, audience, and approach. The interface works extremely well with keyboard or mouse and allows the player to simply point and click in order to use objects, interact with other characters and choose options. The subject matter is ominous and forboding, a cyberpunk universe taken from Hugo and Nebula award-winning George Alec Effinger's *When Gravity Fails* and *A Fire in the Sun*. Effinger himself wrote the game's storyline which is set between the events of the two novels. The game is directed toward mature audiences and offers the added incentive of providing more than a dozen looping nexus points which can enable players to find a "different game" or story.

Color My World (Graphics)

The demand for better graphics in games can be observed in several areas. First, one can quickly observe that much of the excitement about and popularity of **Sega**'s Genesis machine and **NEC**'s Turbo Grafx 16 is due to larger and clearer sprites, leading to more realistic-looking characters and objects. The demand for larger on-screen characters cuts across the genres on both personal computers and in dedicated game systems.

Beyond the improvements in the dedicated game system's graphics, however, are the advances in VGA/MCGA graphics. There were numerous VGA versions/upgrades being demonstrated at the show. **Interplay** is offering an upgrade to *Battlechess* on VGA for $15.00 and **Lucasfilm** was touting a VGA version of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure*. **Microprose** is readying a VGA version of *Silent Service*, but it is expected to feature more than improved graphics.

In addition, **Access Software** offered *CGW* an advance look at the most detailed polygon-filled landscapes ever, using polygons rendered extremely small and scrolling extremely fast. The code was rewritten twice in developing the present state of high-definition. Also impressive is the use of tightly rendered small polygons in the dragon flight simulator from **Strategic Simulations, Inc.**, *DragonStrike*. The VGA graphics by **Westwood Associates** are excellent. **Origin**'s *Bad Blood* and *Ultima VI* will both use a 256 color palette in MCGA mode, **Activision**'s MS-DOS version of *PowerDrift* will support VGA and **ShareData**'s aforementioned *Married With Children* is being designed around VGA graphics, among others.

Sound As A $200 Bill

Access led the way in disk-based digitization with their *Real Sound* technique. **Cinemaware** has now followed suit with *Real Talk*, for including digitized voices, and **Data East** believes their *AFB Sound System* garners the same results as *Real Sound*, while using less memory.

Several producers/developers spoke of the need for a sound standard. With the proliferation of sound boards, each of which needs its own driver, software publishers are having to pick and choose which sound boards to support. This is a delimiting factor which does not help either the consumer who wants his/her board supported or the software publishers who want everyone to buy their products. There needs to be one driver which can determine the number of voices compatible with a computer's sound system and read the necessary data from a DSP (Digital Sampling Profile) file. Until this occurs, confusion will continue to proliferate.

Yet another sound board manufacturer has thrown a hat into the ring. **Advanced Gravis**, well-known for their success in joystick manufacturing, has developed *M/Sound*. *M/Sound* comes in both basic and deluxe configurations. The basic unit connects between a computer's parallel printer port (without interfering with the printer's function) and a printer. Users can connect via RCA plug to a regular amplifier system or plug into the headphone jack on the front of the system. At $69.95, the system offers 10-bit digitally sampled sound running at 8 Mhz and providing four voices at Midi and/or games standard. The deluxe configuration uses an internal card; is **Adlib** and **Tandy TL** compatible (plus intercepts the standard PC sound); can sample a DSP at 5 MIPS (Million Instructions Per Second), offers recording as well as playback; and acts as true 16-bit stereo with CD Quality sound. At $199.95 retail, it is likely to compete very favorably with the **Roland** sound boards.

Other interesting developments in sound revolve around audio stored on compact discs. **Camerica** is bringing out a *CD-Games Pack for C-64/128s and IBM compatibles that will enable gamers to access games from their home stereos. Currently, the company is marketing disks in Europe with up to 30 arcade-style games on them and has a development team,* **Code Masters U.K.** developing four large games which will take advantage of the storage space available and use the CDs audio capacity for having soundtracks for each game which are not only music industry standard, but utilize hit performers from that industry. The basic interface cable should retail around $45.00, but *CGW* has been warned that game access may be too tough on a standard CD player. Perhaps, the company is responding to that by offering a complete package of portable player and interface cable for circa $125.00.

Finally, in announcing *It Came From The Desert*, **Cinemaware**'s CD-ROM game on **NEC**'s *Turbo Grafx 16*, Ken Wirt revealed that, not only will the *Turbo Grafx*' CD-ROM drive play the games designed for it, but it will enable standard CD-Audio disks and CDG (Compact Disc Graphics) standard graphics albums to be played on the system.

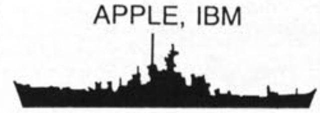
Give Me Your Befuddled Masses

A non-technological trend seems to be reflected in efforts to expand the audience for computer games. **Virgin Mastertronic** has taken an abstract strategy game with elements of "Reversi" and "GO", added exceptional graphics with delightful animation (Rob Stein, primary artist on the game, has used **7-Up**'s "Spot" character to "moon walk", skate, dance, pole-vault and dive into squares as the player makes each move) and entitled it *Spot*. Available in the Spring on the NES system, IBM compatibles, and Amiga computers, *Spot* is certain to appeal to both sexes and a wide range of ages.

The same may be said of Sid Meier's new game for **Microprose**. The working title is *The Golden Age of Railroads*, but the game is a dynamic mix of rail building (with a map editor reminiscent of *Sim City*), economic planning, and model railroading. Not only does one have the satisfaction of building a railroad (purchasing right of ways, laying track, building stations and acquiring rolling stock) with plenty of strategy therein, but one has the opportunity to finance the operations, schedule the runs, select cargo/passengers, modernize the equipment, and/or attempt to take-over other lines. Though the game has competitive elements, it seems to reflect a trend toward broadening subject matter and emphasizing a style of play which is more exploratory than confrontational and entertaining than competitive.

Sierra seemed to point in that direction with its just-released *The Colonel's Bequest* (see review on p. 26), **Spectrum-Holobyte** has expanded their base of customers with their international series of puzzle-based games: *Tetris, Welltris* (and more Soviet designs rumored lurking in the wings), and *Soko-Ban* (from Japan), as well as *Solitaire Royale*. **Taito** successfully implemented this strategy in action/strategy games like *Arkanoid, Arkanoid 2: Revenge of Doh,* and *QIX*. Now, they are developing *Puzznik*, a fast-moving puzzle game (late Spring on

Continued on page 42



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C-64

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SSI

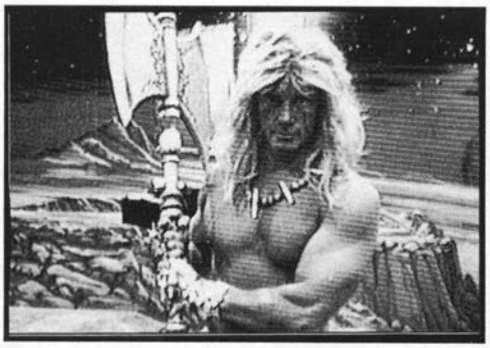
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Panzer Strike	$34
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Questron II	$31
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War of Lance	$28

Winter C.E.S.

Continued from page 39

Apple IIGS, Amiga, C-64/128 and IBM) with 147 levels. Simple in concept, players match shapes to similar shapes while avoiding moving obstacles. In addition, **Miles Computing** recently shipped *Living Jigsaws* (see p. 70) and is ready to release *Puzzle Gallery*, Cliff Johnson's Macintosh game with color, digitized sound and around 180 puzzles.

One of the foremost names in gaming with a mass appeal, **Parker Brothers**, has developed an IBM version of *Trivial Pursuit®: The Computer Game* for one to four players ($39.95). The computer implementation includes questions from five different editions of the boardgame, as well as six computer opponents (each with a specialty) and an ability to customize the game. Previously, **Parker Brothers** had licensed such successful boardgame titles as *Monopoly* and the recently released *Clue: Master Detective* and *Risk* to **Virgin Mastertronic**. Now, the company intends to market an entire line of different *Trivial Pursuit®: The Computer Game* products.



Is this a) CGW's "ham-handed" editor slashing text or b) Sega's "Golden Axe"

Another realm of changing expectations is in the arena of CD-ROM games. Currently, **Cinemaware** is shooting live action footage for *It Came From The Desert* on the *Turbo Grafx 16*'s CD-ROM player. The procedure is roughly akin to film-making and uses the digitized footage and audio soundtracks to enhance the game's entertainment value. The game will allow players to explore roughly 200 hours. Other game concepts tested in this format include a music video type game where players would create their own "broadcast" videos or a soap opera game where players could try their hands at solving some of the messes created on-screen. These games, which de-emphasize the shoot-'em-up nature of both computer and video games, should widen the demographic profiles of gamers considerably.

Making A Connection

Another continuing trend which could be observed at this WCES, was the decision to support connectability by modem and network. Not only have earlier products from **Electronic Arts** (*F-16 Combat Pilot* and *Modem Wars*) and **Spectrum-Holobyte** (*Falcon* and *Vette!*) supported modem play, but **Three Sixty**'s *Harpoon* and **Britannica Software**'s *Guns & Glory* (a strategic naval wargame on the IBM and running under *Windows*, previously known as, *Fleet Action*) will have modem play capability. **GEnie** and **Kesmai** intend to have a network version of *Harpoon* by the end of 1990.



Microprose's Bill Stanley checks out the competition. So, how does it book, Bill? "The Gunship."

In addition, **Spectrum-Holobyte** has made a commitment that ALL their new simulation products will be modem-capable and their *Electronic Battlefield System* will be on-line with **Compuserve** by the last part of the third quarter of 1990. Coordination in those games will be handled using a command structure based on a priority/promotion list which will, in turn, be based on performance and hours. **Spectrum-Holobyte** will also produce *Vette* on the **Sega** *Genesis* machine with connectability for the *Tele-Genesis* option. *Falcon* is likely to follow on that system.

Dan Bunten has brought his multi-player design talents to **Microprose** for what is tentative entitled, *War!* (IBM, Spring Release). It is expected to be an abstract, strategic level game of global conflagration under the technological constraints of World War I, II, or III. The game can be played solitaire against the computer, but should reach its optimal level in modem-to-modem play.

Front Line Players (Wargames)

Spring of 1990 will offer something that smells like victory to traditional wargamers. Not only do important new simulations like *M-1 Tank Platoon, Tank,* and *Harpoon* include important wargaming elements, but there are several new wargames on the horizon. **Strategic Studies Group** is now shipping *Panzer Battles* (Apple II, C-64/128, and IBM), a colorful command simulation of the Eastern Front during World War II. **SSG** is continuing to refine its EGA graphics, has changed its packaging to reflect the American market, and hasn't forgotten their 8-bit roots. *Panzer Battles* uses the Battlefront system.

IBM wargamers should be bowled over by **Strategic Simulations, Inc.**'s spring release, *Second Front*. Originally intended as a remake of Gary Grigsby's critically acclaimed *War In Russia* (CGW Hall of Fame member), this strategic level game allows players to command all the way down to individual tanks, planes and units. Players can plan individual bombing runs or allow the computer to do it for them. Players can call up tons of reports or let the computer handle what it does best. It looks like **SSI** may have actually hit upon the right formula for pleasing both grognards and novices in a challenging traditional style wargame. The graphics are clear, crisp and colorful, as well!

Britannica Software demonstrated *Guns & Glory*, a strategic level naval wargame using 800+ fighting naval units from a World War II order of battle. Although the player can only choose which historical period's units will be available from a European roster, the game is played over a global map and a second product is expected to offer a similar roster from the Pacific Theatre. If the computer opponent accomplishes what the company hopes it will, this product could be a naval wargamer's dream, due to the massive amounts of data and the constructability factor.

A fascinating departure for **Virgin Mastertronic** will be the release of a wargame with a point of view. *Conflict* places the player in the role of an Israeli leader with the responsibility for totally defeating the neighboring Arab states.

Other games have, at least, some

Continued on page 47



A powerful crime syndicate has taken over large areas of our major cities turning them into vast criminal wastelands.

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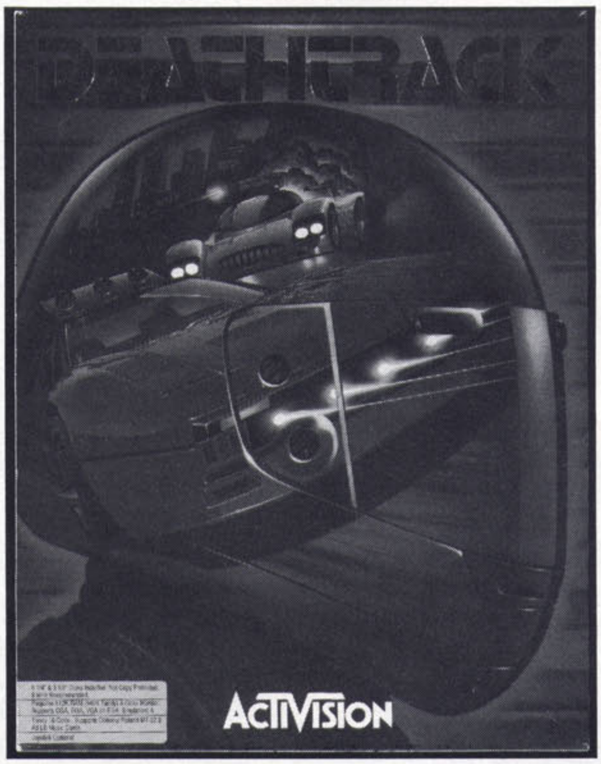
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Murder on the Backstretch

Activision's "DeathTrack"

by Chris A. Lombardi



TITLE:	DeathTrack
SYSTEM:	IBM (Joystick Recommended)
PRICE:	$44.95
DESIGNERS:	Darak Lukaszuk and Terry Ishida
PUBLISHER:	Activision Menlo Park, CA

A Personal Confession from the Reviewer: Excuse the triteness of the expression but, "Commuting is hell". People who don't have to deal with this daily horror would never understand some of the thoughts that go through my mind as I'm creeping 5 miles an hour down the Santa Monica freeway, pinned between two 18 wheelers, with my signal on, my exit slowly fading in the rearview mirror, and the trucker next to me communicating the universal sign of "No way in hell!". In a recurring fantasy, I see myself in an M-1 tank sending such jerks straight to the great big car pool in the sky.

Of course, such violent id urges as these are never actualized. They get repressed and sent back to the seething pit of my psyche where my insane lust for Kim Basinger and my desire to take an ax to my neighbor's disco CD's reside. I grit my teeth, take a large breath of exhaust, and fume my way home. Any psychoanalyst will charge your first-born to tell you this is not healthy behavior, but alas, where to find relief?

Well, I've found the perfect therapy. It's an outstanding new action game from the people at **Activision**. This game, Deathtrack, *puts the player behind a wheel of a super-sports car, armed to the teeth with the latest in high tech weaponry, and lets the driver 'act out' his or her hostility on a track with 10 other drivers whose minds are as twisted as their own. A small, dark corner of my psyche becomes giddy just thinking of it.*

Deathtrack is an intense joystick jammer held together by a thin ribbon of strategy. The player enters the *Deathtrack* racing circuit with a choice of three super cars and $10,000. The object is to race well, manage one's money, and complete the ten race circuit with both a pocket full of dough and one's head intact.

The **Dynamix** design team has performed magic with their '3-space' poly-filled graphics system in such recent releases as *David Wolf: Secret Agent* and *MechWarrior*. They are no less guilty of techno-sorcery in this product. Though the cars themselves may not seem graphically stunning, they have a very realistic feel. The cars corner tightly (depending on the quality of your auto's equipment) and their up-down motion is especially realistic. When airborne after a jump, one almost feels as if he/she is coming out of their seat and when one comes down, there is an expectation of a kidney bruising jar and one's suspension to collapse. It's most impressive when flying off a jump in a pack of cars and seeing the competition soaring right along beside the player's car, as well as in the rear view mirror. The graphics system is extremely well done, though not altogether perfect. Many times, when being passed by another car, the two cars will collide and merge together so that they are sort of inside each other until one car can break free. It's a minor glitch, something of a non-linear digital cohabitation, but a glitch nonetheless.

As exciting as racing can be, one of the things that is often disappointing about many racing simulations is the lack of excitement the action exudes. Sure, the speedometer *says* "200 MPH" and the engine audibly screams, but that 'intoxication' with speed is simply missing. *Au contraire* with *Deathtrack*. With a powerful engine, a good set of spoilers, and a super transmission, the car moves! In fact, one really need not graduate beyond the middle-sized engine because the largest engine simply goes *too* fast. This sense of speed, coupled with the authentic up-down action, and the thrill of hunting other racers really pulls players into the game.

Continued on page 46

Mean Streets

Mean Streets is truly an advanced interactive adventure experience.

Mean Streets has set a new standard for interactive adventure games!
—R. A. Frisk
Sugarland, Texas

Beautiful! A new step ahead in computer entertainment.
—M. A. Platnick
Bluefield, WV

Mean Streets is a major technical breakthrough for the I.B.M.
—Electronic Gamer

Mean Streets is a dazzling product! A showpiece game for VGA machines.
—Video Games and Computer Entertainer

Mean Streets' Real Sound's quality of music, voice & special effects beats anything I've heard from my "Ad Lib"™... hands down!
—H. Nichols
CPAA

Animating digitized images and synchronizing them with great voice and sound simulation for IBM P.C. make Mean Streets more realistic than anything you may already have experienced. To call Mean Streets just another computer game is an understatement!
—Game Player's Strategy



It's the year 2033. Your name is Tex Murphy, private investigator in San Francisco. You've been hired by the beautiful daughter of a university professor to uncover the facts about her father's death.

As you begin your investigation, you uncover the deaths of several prominent members of the scientific community. Are these deaths coincidental, or is something more sinister going on?

- You will interact with more than 27 characters which animate and respond to questions, bribes and threats.
- Some characters actually talk. This spectacular effect is achieved by synchronizing digitized animation with Real Sound™.
- You'll crack high-tech security systems.
- You'll rummage through offices, warehouses, and factories as you search for vital clues.
- You'll risk your life in action-packed shootouts.

Mean Streets features Real Sound™, our own proprietary technology that allows MS-DOS computers to play high quality digitized sound effects, music and speech WITHOUT HARDWARE.

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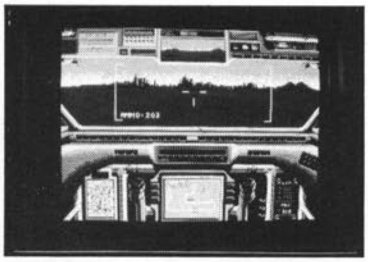
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They Didn't Teach This In Auto Shop

Though success requires lightning reflexes on the track, many races are won and lost in the parts and weapons shops. In the parts shop, players choose be-



tween six auto parts: engine, brakes, transmission, tires, airfoils, and armor in three performance classes. Choosing which combination of parts to employ is the primary strategic decision in the early stages of the game. Buying a turbo engine to outrun the competition is one strategy, but this leaves a car weak in armor and performance parts. Beefing up with armor and weaponry makes a car extremely dangerous, but leaves it slow, unmaneuverable, and at the rear of the pack. The choice is left to experimentation and personal taste.

The weapons shop offers nine types of weaponry, also offered in three calibres of performance. Particle beams, missiles, machine guns, and lasers are the projectile weapons; caltrops (mini-mines) and mines act as obstructives/explosives; and the ram and wheel spikes facilitate bumper-to-bumper combat. A little experimentation will yield an optimal weapons system. Missiles tend to be the most destructive, though most expensive; mines and caltrops are cruel on an auto's soft underbelly; and ram spikes are just plain wicked, catering to the same mentality that enjoys butting heads with rhinos.

The Mad Max School of Accounting

Money management is key in *Deathtrack*. During the average race, even the most skilled drivers will take significant damage (even if it is from running over the smoking chassis of an ex-competitor). If the player cannot afford to field (track?) a race-worthy car, he/she is forced out of the circuit. Thus, if a player's car is completely knocked out of a race, resulting in a huge repair bill, it usually means the end of his/her career.

Keeping the coffers full is accomplished in two ways. The most common, of course, is to place highly in a race. First place will earn $13,000, second $9,500, down to $250 for ninth. Fulfilling death contracts (put out on other drivers) is the other mode of income. Often, players will be approached before a race by a shady character offering a little blood money. Fulfilling the contract earns from $2000-$7000 (and the animosity of the victim and his family). This is a great way for the 'bullies' of the circuit to pick up some mad money.

Deathtrack has a number of small graphic touches and interface niceties that bring the product up a quality notch. For instance, each of the nine competitors has their own personal profile, including a digitized photo of themselves and a poly-filled graphic of the car they drive, along with personal inforamation used as the documentation based copy proteection. Another nice touch is the changing graphic backgrounds of the different tracks. San Francisco has a backdrop including the Golden Gate, while New York displays skyscraper scenery and freeway-like light posts.

The driver's seat view includes a well-done instrument panel. Along with the expected fuel gauge, damage gauge, and speed indicator, is an overhead view of the track showing the player's car in red and the others in black. There is also a screen showing the driver of the car currently in the player's tracking range, along with that car's current place in the race. There's nothing like finding the #1 driver in your sights, pelting him/her with machine gun fire and watching him/her explode into a very realistic fire ball (and running over his/her burnt-out shell just for kicks!). There's also an indicator showing the player's current position in the race and the number of laps completed.

Deathtrack is excellent, a must for action gamers who want high speed action, quick decision-making, and strategic planning engineered into a high-performance package destined for the winner's circle. Also, for anyone on the brink of traffic circle induced lunacy, it is gratuitous violence at its therapeutic best.

Survival Guide for Rookie Drivers

Keep Your Eyes on the Road (and keep your hands to yourself!): A very common mistake among rookie drivers is to become so intent on making a kill that they end up on the shoulder and in last place. Know your tracks. Be especially careful on the winding tracks of Seattle and SanFrancisco.

The number of laps in a race can be set by the player and used to his/her advantage. If one's strategy is to outrun the competition with a monster motor, a shorter race (5 laps or less) is ideal. It gives the competition less chance of taking you out, though there is little opportunity to recover from a driving error. Those who wish to fight their way to the finish will find a longer race (7-10 laps) more beneficial.

Mine Tires Have Seen The Glory: Here is a very effective strategy for those who like to outrun the competition. After placing highly in a race, load up on the explosive of your choice, either caltrops or mines. In the next race, as soon as you are allowed to use weaponry, lay down your entire stock of mines while your competition is still bunched together. With a little practice and luck, you'll be able to take out your stiffest competition at the onset.

The Rocket's Red Glare, Your Competition Bursting Into Air: This strategy is useful if you have a slower car, or end up with terrible pole position. Load up on rockets or terminators, and take out the leaders at the onset. An expensive but very effective strategy.

DeathTrack's greatest hits

"Yo, tracker!" Here's a little shopping list to help ya with your . . . agreements, yeah das' it. Happy huntin'!."

Sly - Black car w/yellow bumpers
Megadeth - Black car w/red tail lights
Killer Angel - Red car w/black rear grill
Lurker - Grey car w/ white bumper
Preying Menace - Grey on white car w/black bumper
Crimson Death - Turquoise car Motor
Maniac - Black car w/yellow & red tail lights
Wrecker - Turquoise w/ blue rear grill
Mellisa - red car w/ yellow & red tail lights

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Winter C.E.S.

military basis. Chris Crawford's *Guns & Butter* (early 1990/Macintosh, Spring release/IBM) is **Mindscape**'s abstract strategic game which presents both economic and military principles in an interesting and replayable game. Crawford's interest in artificial personality makes the diplomatic elements of the game challenging; his background as an educator is reflected in the depth of the database; and his concern about game play seems reflected in the interface. Speaking of original Crawford designs, his next game will be released on Earth Day (April 22). It will be entitled *Balance of the Planet* (Macintosh) and will be an environmental policy simulator. **Maxis** and **Spectrum-Holobyte** both have environmental simulations in the works, as well.

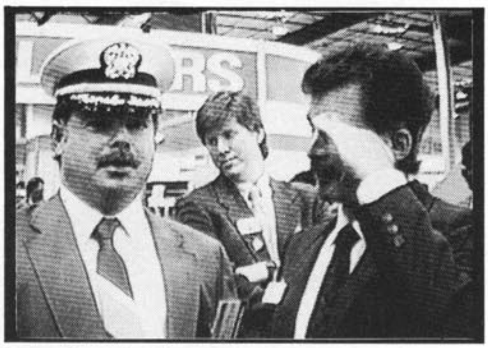
New World Computing has just shipped *Nuclear War* on the Amiga. If gamers do not find a spoof on nuclear war to be offensive, they will find this computerized version of the classic **Flying Buffalo** card game to be humorous and diverting. Avril Harrison's graphics are perfect for expressing the game's satirical tone.

Bo Knows Computers? (Sports Games)

Data East announced their celebrity license for *Bo Jackson Baseball*. Their baseball game is predominantly action-oriented with a distinctive point and click interface, but the most interesting part of the game may well lie in another direction. **Data East** also distributes the software for the *USA Today Sports Center*, a network which emphasizes sports information, fantasy leagues, pick 'em contests, and on-line tournaments for poker, backgammon, "Go", and more. The fascinating news is that players will be able to download current baseball statistics from the *USA Today Sports Center* into *Bo Jackson Baseball* so that player's can manage current teams instead of last year's players.

Cinemaware is rapidly expanding their *TV Sports* line with *TV Sports Basketball* and *TV Sports Baseball*. The basketball game allows up to four players to compete anywhere from two-on-two to five-on-five. Players can take 28 teams (27 NBA cities plus Cinemaware) through a 24 game league schedule, followed by post-season playoffs. Then, once the player wins the championship, the other teams get better. They "get up" for the games with the champions, just like teams tend to in real life. The important departure is that there are 340 different individual/team statistical categories which can be printed onto hard copy. There is also a coach rating to improve competition through adding a handicap.

Though *TV Sports Baseball* follows the company's tradition of action-based games, it has plenty to offer to the stat player. **Beyond Software** (a software development company founded by Don Daglow, original producer of **EA**'s *Earl Weaver Baseball*) is developing the product for **Cinemaware**. The statistical model is based on the *Sabermetrics* system, popularized by *Bill James' Baseball Abstract*. Like earlier products in the series, the game allows players to reserve certain games for human-human or human-computer competition, while allowing the computer to get on with the rest of the league. *TV Sports Baseball* will come with 26 teams which will include the greatest players ever to play for each individual franchise. Season data disks will be available later.



Three-Sixty"s Tom Frisina "Butters up" CGW's Edition-in-cheif w/salute and scrambled eggs.

Last, but not least, is *Greg Norman's Ultimate Golf: Shark Attack*, a golf simulation that is sure to get plenty of attention. Up to four players can participate and computer opponents are provided. There are several choices with regard to rules, the computer opponents can be customized using attribute sliders, the terrain is laid out in a grid system, a "caddy option" can be toggled on/off and there are more decision points than in most golf games.

Full Speed Ahead (Simulations)

Simulations continue to be market leaders with flight simulations out in front (although new vehicles are being modeled).

LHX Attack Chopper from **Electronic Arts** is a mission-based game in the tradition of *FA/18 Interceptor* where players fly the Apache, Blackhawk, Osprey or LHX version of the advanced tactical helicopter. Paul Grace produced the game which features random weather, light-hearted graphics, and MCGA graphics with a 256 color palette.

Accolade is the first U.S. company to allow players to fly Soviet Migs in *Strike Aces*. Based on NATO bombing competitions, the game (much enhanced from its original design as *Fighter Bomber* by Activision U.K.) uses 13 planes in 16 missions, polygon-filled graphics, many zoom features, AdLib and CMS sound board support, and a mission design feature.

Air Transport Pilot, the flight simulation from **Sublogic** which allows players to "earn" their air transport pilot certificate (50 flight hours and 12 successful landings) and compete via performance, earnings, and assignments, is almost ready to ship. 26 details of airports, complete down to taxiways and terminal buildings, are included in the scenery and there are five levels of image complexity, ranging from "Very Sparse" to "Very Complex" (depending on how fast players want the simulation to run). The next major software product from **Sublogic** is designed to cover instrument landings and is tentatively entitled, *Instruments U.S.A.*.

Software is not all that is new from **Sublogic**, however. The company plans to market a heavy-duty control yoke (the prototype is impressive) for $199.95 and realistic control pedals for $49.95. The company hopes these features will further add to the realism of their simulations and is seeking FAA approval of this hardware for part of actual flight school credit.

Based on the popular novel by Stephen Coonts, **Spectrum-Holobyte** is preparing *Flight of the Intruder*, in conjunction with U.K.'s **Mirrorsoft**, for late summer release (IBM). Scenarios for this A-6 and F-4 simulation come right out of the book and include nap of the earth (NOE) flights. As an added bonus, the game release on the IBM is expected to coincide roughly with the release of the movie.

Another vehicle being modeled is the Vietnam-era gunboat, similar to the one seen in the film, *Apocalypse Now*. It will be curious to see if Tom Loughery, designer of *Steel Thunder*, is leading the way for another pack of simulations with *Gunboat: River Combat Simulator*. **Accolade**'s latest mission-based simulation has an interface which is extremely similar to the earlier product and allows

Continued on page 71

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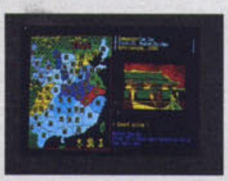
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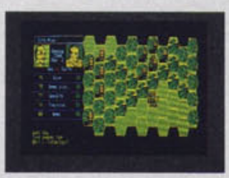
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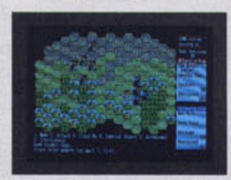
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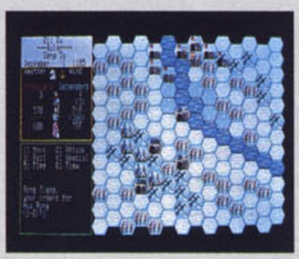
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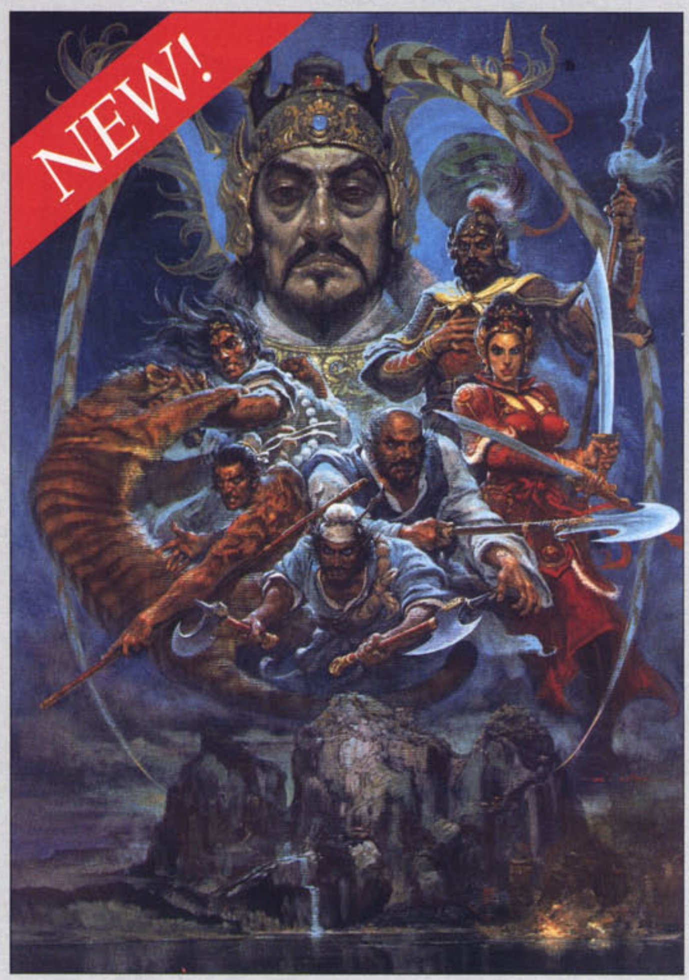








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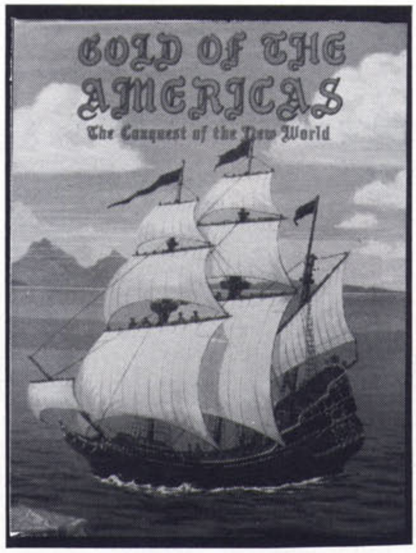
Circle Reader Service #52

Exploration and Exploitation

Strategic Studies Group's Gold of the Americas"

by Chuck Moss

Chuck Moss is a political columnist for the Detroit News *who feels that there is more to life than listening to politicians at rubber chicken banquets and trying to breathe in smoke-filled rooms.*



TITLE:	Gold of the Americas
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, IBM
REVIEWED ON:	IBM
PRICE:	$39.99
DESIGNERS:	Stephen Hart Ian Trout
PUBLISHER:	Strategic Studies Group Walnut Creek, CA

Gold of the Americas is a strategy game for those who like grand scale imperialism, exploitation, exploration, betrayal, enslavement, mayhem and tax evasion. Ian Trout (*Russia, Reach for the Stars*, etc.) and newcomer Stephen Hart have concocted a simple, but highly challenging game of imperial expansion in the New World. *Gold of the Americas* covers 300 years of mad expansion in 30 turns (roughly two hours). Four players, human or computer (with three levels of difficulty), direct one imperial power: Spain, Portugal, France or England. By 1800, Spanish could be spoken from Patagonia to San Francisco Bay or the U.S.A. could be revolting from Portugal.

The game screen is divided into two halves. The left hand side is a map of the Western Hemisphere divided up into 31 areas. The right hand side displays information and command menus. The stylized map is colorful and the icons of men, ships, buildings, etc. look absolutely delightful in EGA graphics.

Discovery of the Game (Mechanics)

Gold of the Americas begins with most of the map unexplored. First is the "Acquisition Phase", where the player buys and places: armies, colonists, ships, slaves, explorers, and/or privateers. Since colonists cannot be placed in unexplored territory, exploration is the player's firsttask. This requires an explorer accompanied by several armies. Once an area has been explored, it will take two to three colonists, a couple of armies and some luck to develop a thriving settlement. Once the colony is settled, players can set the colony to one of three levels: "Development", raising the colony's level of civilization but alienating the natives and settlers; "Placation", keeping everyone happy but taking most of the profit out of the operation; and "Exploitation", providing lots of non-reported income, but tending toward revolution.

After each "10 Year" turn cycle, income is subject to an exorbitant taxation. Fortunately, the secret funds are exempt. However, should the official treasury be short, secret funds can be used to make up the shortfall. The rulebook warns about failing to pay taxes, but this reviewer found that both taxes and "support", i.e., colonists and armies provided free by the mother country, actually vary independently of the income cycle, regardless of whether one pays his taxes or not.

If the player places the colonies intelligently; arms them effectively; manages them wisely; and keeps the profits high, he should emerge victorious. Victory is ultimately decided by a point system, with credit going to the nation with the most and best developed colonies.

Colonial Power (Sample Game)

In this brief sketch of game play, the reviewer controls Spain and the computer controls the rest. Choosing "Random New World", with neither the location of gold nor the actual amount of home support automatically known, the Spanish treasury is $600 and the secret fund holds $700. Spain has provided two armies and two colonists, as well as two explorers: Pinzon (rated three stars) and Ojeida (one star). Since everything costs $500, it seems reasonable to purchase two additional armies.

Next, comes the "Orders" phase. This is 1500, not 1492, so three provinces have already been explored. Texas turns out to be full of gold and looks like the optimal territory to place colonists. Two armies are placed as garrisons and two are sent with "Three Star" Pinzon to explore Louisiana. Poor Ojeida goes to Mexico without any troop support whatsoever (Lotsa' luck!). For colony management, "Placation" seems prudent. This costs time in development, but there are *lots* of Indians in Texas and placating keeps them happy until European diseases can kill them off.

In Turn 2 (1510-1520), all four mother countries have one colony each. France is settling in Buenos Aires, England in Hudson's Bay, and Portugal at the mouth of the Amazon. The Spanish colony is successfully established and the foray into Louisiana finds riches. The expedition into Mexico vanished without a trace, leaving only the graphics of a skull and broken lance beneath a strange and bloody sky to mark their passing.

Next, an odious-looking representative of the Crown demands $1,000 out of the player's $5,500. This is unusual. Usually, the Crown takes *all* of the player's money.

Since armies and warships must be re-purchased every turn, the acquisitions phase is extremely significant. Spain is currently limited to three colonists and no slaves (expedient, if morally reprehensible) can be placed until ALL the Indians are gone from a province. The Spanish Government *does* have two excellent explorers who can double as raiding commanders. Since the display says France has declared war on Spain, one should purchase plenty of armies, as well as trading vessels for the future. A warship? No, it's better to leave a surplus in the coffers, for now.

After placing two colonists in Louisiana, supported by two armies; one colonist in Texas, supported by one army, in order to beef up that colony; and two armies as part of "Three Star" Balboa's expedition to Missouri, it's time to send two armies and "Three Star" De Solis to raid French-held Argentina. Magellan strikes out alone to find Florida (So long, sucker!) and the traders are placed in the Caribbean without protection, while both the Apaches and Choctaws are placated near the colonies (Smallpox will get them soon enough).

All of this makes for a busy turn. Trading income is up; a plague in Texas kills off the Indians; the deceitful Portuguese raid Texas and make off with a lot of gold; Missouri is opened up; and (surprise!) the expedition to Florida vanishes. Fortunately, the

Continued on page 52

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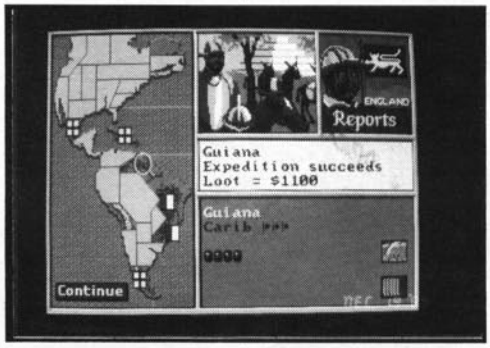
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Continued from page 50

Spanish raid on Buenos Aires makes up for the loss to the Portuguese. The taxman settles for $4,500 out of $7,700 and a new realm of possibilities emerges.

Later, things won't be so rosy. Income will dry up and growth will be strangled as the shortsighted taxman cleans out the colonial treasury and rival French and English powers surge ahead in terms of available resources. Worst of all, as the colonies develop, they become restive and head for independence.



As the tax bill becomes more onerous, players must resort to "Exploitation" to fill their tax-exempt accounts, virtually assuring revolution. It requires a juggling match in order to win. As said before, this game is very simple. It is not simplistic.

Verdict of History

Gold of the Americas is a challenging and entertaining game with a bit of history and good deal of replay value thrown in. The documentation is good and the graphics are excellent. The relatively short game time virtually ensures that gamers will boot up this entertaining item again and again. For God, King, Gold, Glory and Microchip, *Gold of the Americas* is the best way possible to rewrite colonial history.

Historical Hijinx (Hints)

Warning: Readers who dislike hints should skip this section.

Spain starts out strong and fades in the stretch. Players should forget about history, grab the richest colonies in the first five turns, buy plenty of armies, and hold on tight. Spanish colonies tend to revolt easily, so players should avoid using "Exploitation" until the endgame. Portuguese colonies require intelligent management of small, but constant, resources. It is best to stake out claims around a central area and avoid overextending one's resources.

Both France and England start with nothing and surge. At the beginning of the game, it is the most one can do to plant a few strategic colonies and put one's money into traders and raids. After the colonial support builds up, it becomes possible to plant colonies all over the map. Then, toward the end of the game, one can pick off Spanish possessions just prior to their inevitable revolutions, when their loyalty is way down. Also, the slow growth in French and English colonies will mean that their colonies are much younger at the end of the game, so they will have acquired less grievances. Hence, one can exploit them more freely than the Spanish and Portuguese can.

In general, all countries need to purchase armies whenever possible. Better (Three Star) explorers should always be accompanied by, at least, two armies. Always protect the better colonies or raids may wipe out the cash flow. If one has a limited number of available armies, a good explorer can raid enemy colonies, even without military support. Note that newly independent states cannot be conquered.

Finally, all countries should exploit even their most loyal colonies during the last five game turns. They will need the extra cash and there is not enough time for the colonies to revolt. Remember, "Exploitation" is tax-exempt and, when it comes to taxes, the rule of thumb is this: *The crown will take all your money.*

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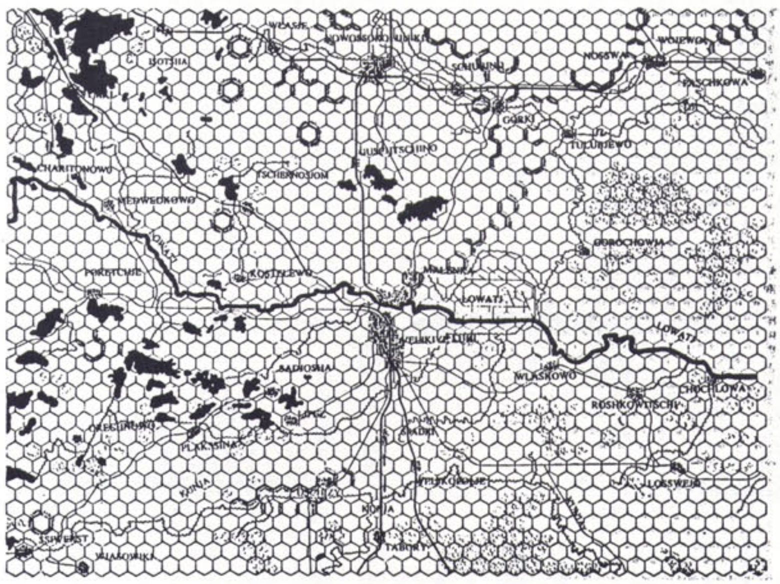
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White Death

by Wyatt Lee

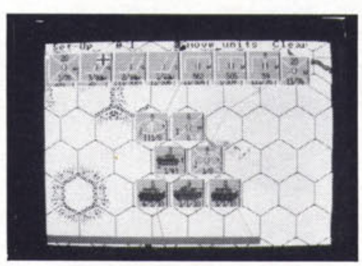
In November of 1942, Lt. General Purkayev (U.S.S.R.) initiated an assault upon the German-held Soviet city of Velikiye Luki (aka Velikie Luki and Velikije Luki), located in the western provinces ("oblasts") of the U.S.S.R. (due south of Leningrad). Historically, the Soviets' goal was to encircle Velikiye Luki, capture the rail lines, bridge the Lowati River (aka Lovat River and Lowatj River) and bring their artillery to bear. The Soviets managed to gain a tactical victory by inflicting an estimated 22,000 German casualties (or more).



White Death, a computerized version of Frank Chadwick's critically acclaimed boardgame of the same name, is based on this campaign. In many ways, it is a careful adaptation that has succeeded in solving some of the drawbacks of earlier boardgame to computer game conversions. In other ways, it emphasizes those drawbacks.

Like **Command Simulations'** *Blitzkrieg at the Ardennes*, the game offers a solid solution to the map problem. Players can get the "big picture" from the complete map and zoom in for an "up close and personal" perspective with a simple point and click. This aspect of the game simulates the ability of a boardgame player to see the entire game board at a glance and then, lean over to focus in on one particular area of the board. It accomplishes this extremely effectively. Like the boardgames it emulates, *White Death* also features colorful and legible "counters" and attractively rendered hexes. Even better, the game adds an arsenal of impressive sound effects on the Amiga (the best we've heard since **SSI**'s Amiga *Kampfgruppe*).

The drawbacks which *White Death* and *Blitzkrieg at the Ardennes* have *not* solved involve questions of interface. Although the programmers have offered players the option of using keystrokes or pull-down menus for delineating and resolving movement, barrages, and combat, the entire process is awkward. In combat, for example, one must select the target stack followed consecutively by each stack of attacking units and each individual unit. If the player's adrenalin causes him to click on the "OK" box before every individual unit is selected for the attack, there is no way to back up. One repeats the process for all possible combat before resolving the defensive fire. If not, there is no way to backtrack. Then, one must designate the coordinating headquarters for the attack (by clicking on the stack, followed by the individual unit), delineate the participating artillery units, individual target unit, (in order to resolve artillery fire), and resolve the attack. A process fraught with perils until one gets used to it.



Further, the computer opponent still leaves much to be desired. It is *de rigeur* to complain that a computer opponent is slow and there are certainly times in *White Death* (on either machine) when the human player will feel like the computer has locked up. On the other hand, who hasn't had a feeling that a human opponent was moving with glacial deliberation whenever he was ready to press the attack.

Of more consequence, perhaps, is the lack of strategic ability. When commanding the Soviets, the computer opponent lacks a killer instinct. It will neither obliterate the bunkers nor cross the river. Since the computer-commanded Soviets will primarily "barrage" rather than advance, human players commanding the German side can utilize their ski units to block supply routes, hence killing the Soviet player's barrages. The German forces inevitably take significant losses from the opening barrage, but players can avoid facing further barrages by cutting Soviet supply.

When the computer opponent commands the Germans, it is even more conservative than traditional AI routines. It takes positions and simply holds them until the Soviet player presses those positions, missing numerous opportunities for successful counterattacks and not cutting off Soviet supply like a human player would.

In spite of the drawbacks, *White Death* is a successful translation of the boardgame. It offers a satisfying (if not *always* challenging) gaming experience in the long run, though there is a steep learning curve for non-grognards at the very beginning. If **Command Simulations** advances the routines for the computer opponents, reduces the learning curve, and offers more thought toward "idiot-proofing" the interface, its series of boardgame style computer wargames could finally fill a long-neglected niche in the hobby. Those who are unwilling to wade through documentation will want to pass on *White Death*, as will those who feel a need for either "real-time" decision-making or bit-mapped pyrotechnics to stimulate their adrenalin. For those who desire the detail of a boardgame where the computer both performs the book-keeping functions and provides a built-in opponent, *White Death* is an extremely viable choice.

CGW

TITLE:	White Death
SYSTEMS:	Amiga (w/ 1 MB) and IBM (w/ EGA)
REVIEWED ON:	Amiga
# PLAYERS:	1-2
PRICE:	$59.95 (Amiga) $49.95 (IBM)
DESIGNERS:	Frank Chadwick, Shelby Stanton, Al Benincasa, and Joseph Benincasa
PUBLISHER:	Command Simulations Bldg. 3, 297 North Street Hyannis, MA 02601

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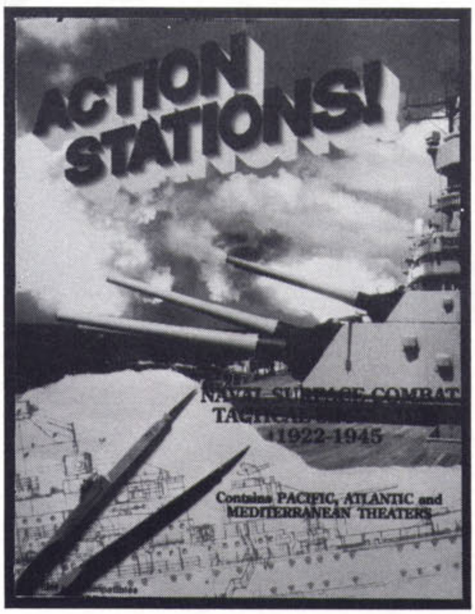
Action Stations

Tactical Naval Simulation From An Officer's Perspective

by Lt. H. E. Dille

The torpedo lifted the proud old greyhound out of the water and broke her back effortlessly. A few of the crew members lived long enough to comprehend, at least on a subliminal level, that a streaking silver fish had wrought the explosion that preceded blackness. The men trapped in the forward section were, perhaps, the most unfortunate, as the blast knocked the superstructure askew and the off-balance weight dragged the destroyer's barnacle-coated belly toward the sky. Denied the privilege of dying together, small knots of survivors struggled and hoped for several hours in the watertight tomb until, mercifully, it slid toward the mud of Ironbottom Sound. Amazingly, the after section and its occupants emerged relatively unscathed from the ordeal. Defiant to the last, they even managed to fire several rounds from the one remaining functional gun mount at their retiring foes.

The history of the Second World War is replete with stories of valor, stories of men making the most of what remained in desperate situations. Although numerous computer products have covered naval surface combat during this period, none have depicted the desperate drama of fighting to keep a ship alive as well as *Action Stations*. The program was written by a professional naval officer who invested nearly seven man years into verification of the authenticity of ship interiors and development of gunfire resolution and damage control routines that realistically portray the impact every type of damage has on the ship's capacity to continue the fight. As another professional naval officer, with experience in actual shipboard fires and flooding, this reviewer may state unequivocally that his portion of the product is unparalleled in today's market. Of course, this is only one part of the entire program.



TITLE:	Action Stations: Naval Surface Combat Tactical Simulation 1922-1945
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Alan D. Zimm
PUBLISHER	Conflict Analytics 119-2 Norfolk Road NAS Alameda, CA 94501

Getting Underway

Action Stations is an extensive and detailed look at the surface officer's art of war at sea. The "glory hog" flat tops (aircraft carriers) and denizens of the deep (submarines) have no representation in this game. Additionally, all other forms of air power have been eschewed with the exception of spotter aircraft which were frequently carried by the larger warships. A certain degree of historic ambiguity is introduced by the decision to exclude air power in toto, largely because the presence or threat of air power often influenced command decisions (the Battle of the Komandorski Islands is a case in point). The elimination of these elements does, however, focus players on those factors through which a surface officer plies his art directly: knowledge of enemy capabilities and limitations, tactical maneuver to gain advantage and concentration of firepower to achieve the desired result.

The program offers thirty total scenarios from the time period covered, as well as the ability to build scenarios or specify certain parameters and let the computer generate a scenario based upon those inputs. Smaller scenarios may be played in as little as fifteen minutes utilizing the automatic gun director and formation features of the game. Some larger scenarios contain as many as forty-nine ships and may take several days to complete. Night scenarios, with star shells and searchlights, require a bit longer to execute than daylight ones, due to additional rules regarding visibility under such conditions. Herein lies one of this reviewer's concerns. Turn execution time, especially on standard XT compatibles, is *slow*! On larger scenarios, one may expect to wait three minutes between completion of order input and turn resolution. Although this may not sound like a lot, it translates to hours of dead time over the course of a big game. Fortunately, the problem is less noticeable on AT compatible machines.

Once a scenario is selected, play centers upon the main battle plot display. Essentially, this is an x,y coordinate grid similar to those found in shipboard Combat Information Centers. All contacts are displayed as circles (friendly) or squares (both hostiles and unknown), with vectors indicating the speed and direction of travel for each one. Dotted lines represent gunfire distribution; yellow circles represent star shell looms; concentric circles indicate an explosion; and numerous other standard naval symbols are used to graphically portray events on the plot. Plot scale is variable such that one may zoom in on a given section of the action. Although this system may not be as aesthetically pleasing as the graphics of a game like *Harpoon*, it *does* accurately represent the plots utilized by tactical action officers of the time.

From the main battle plot, one may access a number of pull-down menus for the issuance of orders, as well as several report screens. Briefly, players possess the ability to control all movement (individually or in formation); assign guns to

Continued on page 60



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STRATEGIC SIMULATIONS, INC.®

Origin/CGW Omega Tournament Report

AUSTIN (CGW) -- The Origin/CGW National Omega Tournament enters the homestretch with the completion of the December tournament. A total of 79 tanks blasted there way through the monthly tournament. The top six finishers have been added to the 24 that have already qualified for the Omega/CGW Championship Round. The Championship Round will be hosted by CGW at the beautiful Britannia Manor (home of Lord British) in February. A full report of the Championship Round will appear in the April issue of CGW.

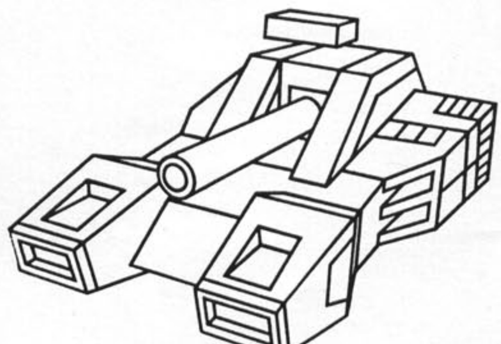
The winner of the December tournament was Steven Schafer of McHenry, MD. Steve's OMEGA level design, STRYKB2, was designed with the IBM version of Omega. Also reaching the Top Six in the December Tournament was DRAGON2 (Dennis Belcher, Princeton Junction, NJ); TYSON (Barry Lampert, Hollywood, CA); HIBLE (Bill Mechefske, Canada); STRIKER2 (Steve Schafer, McHenry, MD); DORSAI (Gus Smedstad, Kentwood, MI). The results of the January Tournament will be published in the March issue of CGW.

Comments From OSI Officials

In the December Tournament we revisited the battlefields of Austin, Houston, and Small. The tanks seemed to maintain aggressive design, although few were bold enough to charge into battle with abandon. The level of sophistication of the designs have greatly improved over the months, and this tournament was no exception. OSI officials were also pleased to note that even larger numbers of "employees" were able to participate. OSI hopes that at least 100 of its nearly 1000 "employees" will participate in the January Tournament.

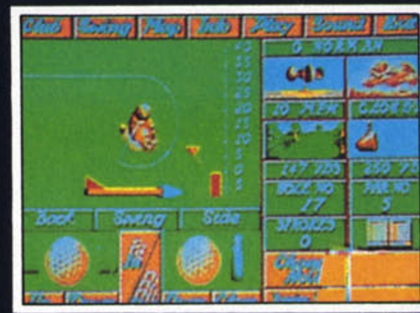
OSI MEMO: All cybertank engineers are reminded that the battlefields used in the tournaments are subject to change or modification. Tanks should be designed with a variety of terrain expected.

If you are uncertain whether or not you have qualified to participate in the Championship Round, OSI has a list of currently qualified engineers available for downloading from the OMEGA REMOTE ACCESS BOARD at 1-512-328-8402.



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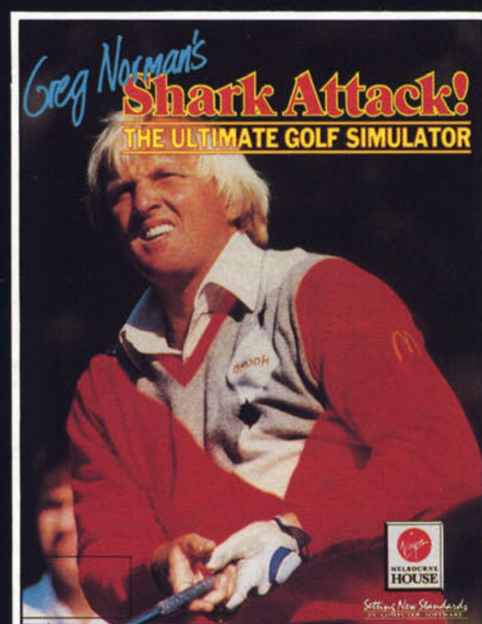
ATARI ST



IBM EGA

- A 3-D perspective, which can be rotated through 360 degrees from any point. You can really walk each hole, and study the lie of each shot just like you would on a real golf course (one of the features that make this a simulation, not just a game).
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AVAILABILITY:-

Atari ST	Shipping
MS-DOS	Shipping
Amiga	Shipping
Commodore 64	Spring '90

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Continued from page 56

Action Stations!

directors and directors to targets (or have this accomplished automatically); compute torpedo firing solutions and launch same; and control smoke, searchlight and star shell placement. The options to flood ammunition magazines and counterflood spaces to reduce list are available under damage control.

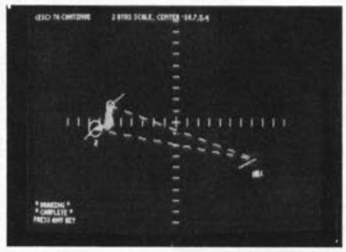
In addition, the various report options are also quite comprehensive, containing far more information than can be adequately elaborated upon in a standard sized review. A concise synopsis follows. The "Damage Status" report offers data on individual ship status, including: all gun/torpedo mounts, directors, engineering/steering degradations, remaining flotation, list, damage control teams remaining, etc. Other reports include: "Lookout/Radar" (detailing what can be seen from the vantage point of any ship in the force), "Fleet Deployment" (summarizing unit positions by grid location), "Fleet Battery" (noting the fire distribution for the entire force), "Current Hits" (recounting actual hits incurred by friendly vessels and offering an estimate of the effectiveness of fire on the enemy during the preceding three minutes of game time), and "Range/Penetration" (providing information regarding optimal ranges for vertical and horizontal armor penetration from any selected ship to a particular target).

With all this data at the player's fingertips, the input of data for a single turn may vary widely from less than a minute to fifteen minutes, depending on both the size of the action and the number of menus accessed. Obviously, one need not access all of these menus each turn.

Hit Alfa! Hit Alfa! Amidships

As damage levels begin to mount, *Action stations* comes into its own. The gunfire/torpedo resolution routines are quite complex. Once a hit is determined to have occurred, the angle of the fall of the shell is calculated; one of forty-two distinct zones is determined to be the most probable hit location; armor penetration is calculated in accordance with zone and shell type; and this is factored against the "dud rate". Even duds, of course, can inflict penetration damage and knock major pieces of equipment off line. Hits to the bridge and other control stations may affect steering or gun director assignment, as well. For example, in one game, the lead cruiser of a three ship formation was struck in the bridge by a light calibre shell. In the ensuing confusion, her sudden course change caused a collision with the cruiser directly astern. Both ships were severely damaged by the collision, one dead in the water for the remainder of the game and the other reduced to a mere nine knots maximum speed, all because of a lucky shot from a Japanese destroyer. Such are the fortunes of war.

Based upon the location of fires, magazines might have to be flooded, spaces adjacent to the fire might have to be evacuated (leading to the temporary



loss of those facilities, engineering spaces, gun mounts, etc. until the fire is extinguished) and additional equipment may suffer as the fire progresses. Discerning commanders may opt to cease firing temporarily to allow their gun crews to assist the damage control teams in combating the blaze (if the situation permits, of course). As long as damage control teams exist, every effort is made to preclude progressive damage and some forms of battle repair are being undertaken to restore as much capability to the ship as possible.

Torpedo resolution takes into account the angle at which the ship is struck (precise to less than one yard and within three seconds for impact time). Once the location of the hit is determined, dud factors are once again considered and the explosive impact calculated for all spaces in the affected area. Damage control is handled as thoroughly as in the shell hit routines with, of course, attention to list, loss of flotation, and shock damage factored in.

Abandon Ship!

Every silver lining has a cloud wrapped around it and *Action Stations* is no exception. As the first offering from a fledgling firm, it is not surprising that the initial production run of disks escaped with some bugs intact (program crashes on scenarios using Fleet 1 or 2; CSENE malfunctions as players call up the battle plot by using the "Previous Point" option in the first turn; ships 23 and 33 in the "Barents Sea" scenario must be maneuvered apart in the first turn; AUTOWARRIOR disengages forces automatically in the "Calabria" and "Spartivento" scenarios; close range anomalies exist which can lead to abnormally high hit rates; and several minor errors exist in the gun data files).

Because of these errors, version 1.0 is no longer shipping. Version 2.0 corrects all of these problems, adds several new features and improvements based on consumer feedback. **Conflict Analytics** will automatically send the updated disks, absolutely FREE, to all *registered* owners of version 1.0. Don't despair, however, if that registration card hit the circular file. Those who purchased the game directly from **Conflict Analytics** were automatically registered and those who purchased from **TEVEX** can simply mail their names and addresses directly to **Conflict Analytics**. for verification.

Where's The Bloody Fog?

At last, one cannot evade an issue that has sparked a fair degree of heated debate within the industry, especially within these pages. How good is any game that does not accurately reflect the fog of war? *Action Stations*, by virtue of allowing the player to stick his nose into every detail, is aligned farther toward the realm of omnipotent board gaming that many of us cut our teeth on than some players will like. Granted, enemy ships must still be identified at night, smoke and stack gasses still preclude perfect visibility, and there is an uncertainty to the degree of damage inflicted upon the enemy, but the natural breakdown of coordination between elements of the same force does not occur. In discussions with the designer, it was determined that the option to command from the flagship only (significantly more realistic) was scrapped due to memory limitations and to avoid disk swapping. Although this option will not be included in version 2.0, it will most likely be included in the next title released by the firm.

Rescued At Last!

Action Stations, despite the criticisms advanced in this review, is a superlative first effort. The play value is superb and completion of all the scenarios included with the game could take players up to a year of standard play to master. Regardless of how much is packaged with the game, some players have already lobbied for an additional scenario disk. One is planned for release in early 1990 at a price of $9.95. It is expected to incorporate a lot of traditional historical debates like, what if the Washington Naval Treaty never happened and Japan went to war with the U.S. in 1930? Or, even better, what if WWII didn't start until 1945 and Germany had completed her shipbuilding plan (including a proposed battleship with 20" guns)? Interesting possibilities, to say the least.

On a final note, the designers at **Conflict Analytics** have proven extremely responsive to feedback. This fosters a somewhat unique environment where players may take a very active role in molding future products from this firm. Don't pass up the opportunity.

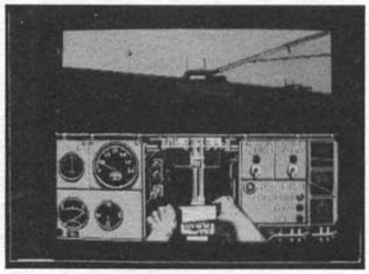
Continued from page 22

TANK

is not the second-line-first-line-veterans-elite that *M1 Tank Platoon* offered. On the other hand, one will often be unaware of the caliber of the enemy until such knowledge is achieved too late and at too high a cost.

There is no acceleration key, since the use of one would cause the AI to interact somewhat strangely. This means that scenarios may often take some time to develop. However, time is of the essence! Victory conditions are based on mission objectives within a specified time limit. This can be frustrating, but it is accurate. Combat often requires sub-optimal maneuver if a timely success is to be achieved.

The strategic map uses standard military icons, not a rendition of armor silhouettes. This reviewer considered such usage to allow a more operational level gestalt; a friend noted that it does not allow one to perceive who is firing at whom and from what sector a la M1 Tank Platoon. This is true, but one has to decide whether he wants to remain as a platoon commander or graduate to the rigors of battalion command. Exact handling of vehicles is indeed more difficult, but this may well reflect the tribulations of the battalion commander.



The scenarios are related to their geographic environment, but not linked. Thus, success or failure in one mission will not affect subsequent missions. A comprehensive campaign would have been appreciated; this may well come to fruition as *Tank* is modified in the near future.

Tank is playable by modem, although only in a tank vs. tank engagement. Some initial problems with the modem have been corrected and it is available as an option. Version 2.0 (late 1990?) may well expand the modemability to include battalion engagements.

This reviewer covered tactical considerations in a review of *M1 Tank Platoon* [December 1989, page 24]. Those observations remain true.

Doctrinal Questions

NO INFANTRY!!

As the Israelis discovered in 1973, the use of armor without infantry support can be fatal. As Army officers are fond of saying, "You know what we call tanks without infantry?—DEAD!!" Sadly, *Tank* has no infantry; both sides are armor heavy. This could well occur in rare instances, but the absence of infantry is sorely missed in what purports to be a simulation of the contemporary battlefield.

Laser Gunsight

In version 1.0 (replaced by version 1.01 within a week of release), the laser gunsight was able to immediately lock onto any enemy vehicle and yield virtual certain hits; no lead was required for crossing targets. Based upon comments by users, Spectrum modified the ranging system and it now requires three (3) seconds to achieve a lock-on. This is

taken directly from the actual M1 Tank Manual. However, while the vehicle is in motion, the stabilization system performs, at best, poorly in the simulation. Achieving speeds of greater than 15 mph yields a gunsight picture guaranteed to induce vertigo. The automatic gunner mode is capable of stabilized sighting; the human player cannot do so. Spectrum is aware of this problem and is working on a revision which should alleviate the problem. However, currently, the simulation is more reminiscent of an M60 (mid-1960 vintage) than a contemporary M1.

Logistics

Tanks, while arguably the best vehicle for securing the parking spot of one's choice, are notorious gas guzzlers. *Tank* reflects this and it is very possible to run out of fuel in the middle of combat (not exactly yielding a "warm fuzzy feeling", but rather a high "pucker" factor). But there are fuel depots to refuel; just remember that refueling takes time and the clock is ticking! This also forces one to choose between slower speeds (more fuel economical) or higher speeds (presenting less of a target and closing with rapid shock firepower—the raison d'etre of armor).

Vehicle Mix

Older tanks (both U.S. [M-60] and Russian [T-64]) have been omitted. Both are still used, especially by Third World nations (Syria probably still retains some T-64s, although it lost most of them to Israel in 1967 and 1973).

Victory Conditions

Victory conditions yield a victory point Fitrep (Fitness Report). Since this is not measured against any external standard, one is not really sure of how well one succeeded. Even more important, the term FITREP is a navy term and is not utilized in the army. The proper terminology would have been ER (efficiency report), OER (officer efficiency report) and EER (enlisted efficiency report).

Conclusions

In comparing *M1 Tank Platoon* and *TANK*, this reviewer would note that Microprose Software furnishes a product. Once it reaches market, changes are minor and updates are not designed. However, the product is well-executed and buttressed by excellent documentation. Spectrum Holobyte utilizes a different perspective; when one purchases *Tank*, he is purchasing a process and not a product.

As with Spectrum's *Falcon*, the simulation undergoes numerous evolutions and revisions. The revisions are made available at a reasonable cost, and such revisions reflect the comments and criticisms of the gaming public. Future revisions may well include hard-copy maps (essential for plotting defensive positions and alternate positions as well as determining axes of advance).

By the time the "Electronic Battlefield System" is functional, *Tank Version 2.0* will be released (owners of older versions will be allowed to upgrade as per usual Spectrum policy). The EBS concept is intriguing and should be very entertaining. At the present time, in a head-to-head comparison, this reviewer feels that *M1 Tank Platoon* is a more accurate simulation (especially due to the lack of infantry in *Tank*). However, as the Schaefer Beer jingle used to go: Spectrum may well "be the one to have when you're having more than one!"

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Continued from page 15

HARPOON

dow, but the scenario itself is quick and easy to learn (as it involves only surface combatants). As noted above, Soviet missile ranges far exceed those of the Norwegians, while the latter may acquire targets earlier. This means that a gradual creeping of NATO is doomed—it will permit the Soviet more time to acquire the target. Therefore, NATO strategy damns the torpedoes and full speed ahead! The Storms are valuable for their offensive power and decoy status. Often, they may be able to destroy the Soviets, although they can also die in place. Any left-overs can be picked up by the heavier *Oslo* and *Leander*. As for Soviet tactics, they should seek to destroy the heavier vessels first and then turn on the Storms and launch while still relatively safe from the counter-thrust. The Soviets may win without the loss or damage of a single ship; NATO will generally have to lose the Storms in order to achieve victory.

The scenarios grow in both intensity and size, each acting as a semi-tutorial for the next. *Harpoon* does not allow the computer to play itself (a good learning device), but if one is confused, switching sides and seeing the view from the Other Bridge will yield better insights.

Somewhere Over The "Horiz"

Some confusion may arise for the non-naval user. Often, a range circle may indicate a target within range, but the staff assistant will deny the potential for attack. This is because locations are approximate and may vary by dozens of nautical miles. Remember that information received is imperfect at best.

Certain missile ranges are noted as "horiz". This refers to radar horizon, and *not* visual range (generally up to 25 nautical miles), and can make a major difference in when targets may be acquired. Speeds of groups may be adjusted to creep, cruise or maximum cruise.

A command "ungroup same type weapon" may appear semi-cryptic. This merely allows the user to individually examine each gun mount/arc of fire on a vessel. Many of the terms used in the simulation are unfamiliar but will become easily understood through game play.

Certain ship classes have been omitted, e.g. Soviet Trantul III (missile boats, generally found in the Mediterranean, but some might be assigned to the Northern Fleet), Kara (CG) and Kanin (DDG). However, a similar class is found in the GIUK BattleSet. This reviewer was hoping that the future scenario editor would allow one to transfer ships from different BattleSets. This will not be possible, but the database is sufficient to keep all but the most jaded naval gamer happy.

Some users have criticized *Harpoon* for not emphasizing EW (electronic warfare) on the user level, but it is not actually an aspect at that level of command. Also, heavy EW environments tend to yield little talk and less action! There are no anti-torpedo options (nixies), but again, these are at a lower level of command (Ships launch SAMs as a defensive measure automatically. A similar message could have been added for nixies, but their effectiveness is limited enough that such a message would be rarely useful).

Harpoon is a large program—requiring at least 550 free K for even the smaller scenarios. TSR (terminate and stay resident) programs may have to be disabled in order to play the simulation. Also, larger scenarios have a dismaying tendency to crash, and should be saved frequently. The first revision (18 January 1990) should have, hopefully, reduced the fatal crash errors. However, in addition to the revisions, **Three-Sixty** is planning a major update for the fourth quarter of 1990 which will incorporate features desired by users (e.g. in-flight refueling of air assets). Indeed, the users have been vocal. On **GEnie** (a modemplay electronic network), a *Harpoon* topic generated 66 messages in 14 days.

High Water Mark

Harpoon is a must-have for the serious naval gamer. Its depth recommends it, even *with* its current annoying tendency to crash at higher scenarios. The designers should have the newer generation of bugs decimated by the date of publication. For the person whose naval desires do not extend beyond sinking an occasional destroyer with his "rubber duckie" in the bathtub, *Harpoon* may prove a stone best left unturned. A person lacking any expertise in Naval affairs will learn many lessons from this simulation, although the learning curve may be somewhat steep. Nevertheless, for the gamer interested in naval operations, *Harpoon* is the current benchmark. Documentation and crashes notwithstanding, *Harpoon* is here to stay.

Please box this paragraph.

M. Evan Brooks will host a live modem conference on GEnie's RoundTable (page 805) with *Harpoon*'s Larry Bond and Gordon Walton on 12 February 1990 at 9:30 PM (EST). Interested users may inquire about joining GEnie at 800-638-9636. A transcript of the conference will be placed in the the Library there for future downloads. This is part of a monthly conference with noted guests in the simulation field.

Conversions Received



Action Stations
(Conflict Analytics) IBM
After Burner
(Sega) Amiga
Blue Angels
(Accolade) C-64
Double Dragon II
(Mastertronic) C-64
The Fool's Errand
(Miles Computing) IBM
Jam Session
(Broderbund) IIGS
John Madden Football
(EA) C-64
John Madden Players Disk '87 -'88
(EA) IBM
Magic Johnson's Basketball
(Melbourne) Amiga,C-64
Omega
(Origin) Mac
Omni-play Horse Racing
(SportTime) C-64
Planet of Lust
(Free Spirit) ST
Populous
(EA) IBM
QIX
(Taito) IBM
RoboCop
(Data East) Apple II
Romance of The Three Kingdoms
(Koei) Amiga
Sentinel Worlds I
(EA) C-64
Solitaire Royale
(Spectrum) IIGS
Starflight
(EA) Amiga
TV Sports Football
(Cinemaware) IBM

(Continued from page 9)

Swords of Twilight

than a "Journey Ration"; etc. The intricate details are numerous. The eight worlds of *Swords* feel rich and complete in every way, as do the actions of the people living in the worlds.

Such attention to detail carries over to the conversations with the various denizens of *Swords*. Every race and each different monster says things in a different manner offering different nuances and even the nuances change further with different attitudes (e.g. a "Wary" wraith will speak differently than a "Polite" wraith). In addition, conversations carry over throughout a world, helping to build a reputation. While a race of creatures may start "Hostile" to the players, it is possible to eventually convert them to "Friendly". The reverse is also true, as wanton slaughter will not help one's reputation. There are too many CRPGs available which completely ignore the conversational aspect of gaming. One of the major delights of *Swords* is how well this area is handled.

Perhaps an even stronger aspect of the game is its flexibility. While there are definite objectives to be accomplished, there is never only one solution. The game allows a player to get exactly what he wants from it. If the player wants to hack-and-slash, it is possible to run about killing anything in sight (of course, this makes conversation more difficult). If the player wants to take a more peaceable route, it is possible to attempt friendly relationships with everyone. Such a course makes food gathering, information hunting, and even Shadowlord assassination much easier. At last, a game where Virtue is more than its own reward. Regardless of how a player opts, this attempt to provide a non-linear, unrestrictive game extends to most facets of game play (either a key, or brute strength can open doors, and the Shadowlords can be killed even without the proper "Sword").

Of significant importance to the success of the game is the multi-player system. While it is *possible* to play a solitaire game, this is not recommended; the computer handles NPCs extremely well, but the full experience of fantasy teamwork cannot be enjoyed unless other human players participate. Much of the fun comes from dealing with other people through the game environment, as Mages argue about protection and warriors hassle over the various armaments and magical treasures. If possible, the player should get two friends together and have all three slots filled with humans, using the computer only as a temporary substitution.

The Glowing Blade (Conclusion)

Without doubt, *Swords of Twilight* is one of the best CRPGs to ever come to this writer's attention. While there are some snags in the interface and with the occasional sluggish response, the game offers a depth and realism rarely seen in any computer game. Through interesting conversations and otherworldly travels, the player discovers a world rich in detail, and danger. The magic is fun, the combat invigorating and the dialogues involving. Add to this a truly simultaneous multi-player system, and the game wins my vote for CRPG of the year. One simply cannot recommend this game highly enough. **CGW**

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BATTLE TANK: BARBAROSSA TO STALINGRAD, Grand Tactical Armoured Combat In The East, June 1941 - May 1943. "Early on Sunday morning, June 22, the German flood poured across the frontier, in three great parallel surges between the Baltic Sea and the Carpatian Mountains." As the commander of a front line regiment, you will be part of that surge, aiming your tanks and infantry for the heart of Russia. Or, backed by your T-34s and massed artillery, you can be part of the rock that tide would eventually wash up against at Stalingrad.

BATTLE TANK: BARBAROSSA TO STALINGRAD is a command oriented, viewpoint style study of the first half of the Second World War in the East. Your main maneuver elements are companies and platoons. The full range of TOEs of the period are under your command, from recon vehicles to Panzer regiments. 7 pre-built scenarios allow the players to get immediately into the game, but the heart of the simulation is a build-your-own routine that allows you to create scenarios simulating innumerable actions between German and Soviet forces. 2 may play, or the computer will play either side. Design and development by S. Newberg & S. St. John; art by J. Kula. Amiga, Atari ST, or IBMPC.

MALTA STORM, The Battle For The Central Mediterranean, December 1941 - August 1942. The original Italian plan had seemed simple: Confiscate the lightly defended territories of North Africa, thus reestablishing the Italian Empire and and pushing out the interfering English at the same time. It would only require the refurbished and enlargened La Regia Marina to establish secure supply lanes across the narrow passage from Italy to Tripoli. Certainly not a problem, considering the assistance of the Luftwaffe. After all, the main Allied staging areas were off at the opposite ends of the Med: Alexandria in Egypt and Gibraltar in Spain. Only the tiny outpost on the central island of Malta stood in the way...

MALTA STORM is an operational and strategic examination of the Axis attempt to obtain control of the Central Mediterranean in the face of a fierce Allied determination to contest that control. Using an innovative system, players are placed in the roles of Cunningham or Kesselring. 2 may play, or the computer will play either side. Design by R. Crandall, development by S. Newberg, & art by J. Kula. Amiga, Atari ST, or IBMPC.

OTHER SIMULATIONS CANADA COMPUTER GAMES:

MAIN BATTLE TANK: CENTRAL GERMANY, Modern Grand Tactical Armoured Combat. Amiga, Apple II, Atari ST, or IBMPC.

KRIEGSMARINE, Tactical Naval Combat In The Atlantic, 1939-1945. Atari ST, or IBMPC.

NORTHERN FLEET, Modern Naval Operations In The Atlantic Ocean. Apple II, Atari ST, or IBMPC.

GRAND FLEET, Tactical Naval Combat In The North Sea, 1906-1920. Atari ST, or IBMPC.

ROMMEL AT EL ALAMEIN, Battles For Egypt, 1 July To 6 November, 1942. Apple II, Atari ST, or IBMPC.

IN HARM'S WAY, Tactical Naval Combat In The Pacific, 1943-1944. Apple II, Atari ST, C64/128, or IBMPC.

MOSCOW CAMPAIGN, Typhoon & White Storm, 30 Aug 1941-13 Feb 1942. Apple II, Atari ST, or IBMPC.

LONG LANCE, Tactical Naval Combat In The Pacific, 1942. Apple II, Atari ST, C64/128, or IBMPC.

TO THE RHINE, The Allied Advance In The West, 29 Aug-11 Dec, 1944. Apple II, Atari ST, or IBMPC.

ROMMEL AT GAZALA, Battles For Tobruk, 26 May to 27 June, 1942. Apple II, Atari ST, or IBMPC.

STALINGRAD CAMPAIGN, The Turning Point, Jun 1942-Feb 1943. Apple II, Atari ST, C64/128, or IBMPC.

KURSK CAMPAIGN, Operation Zitadelle, Summer, 1943. Apple II, Atari ST, or IBMPC.

OPERATION OVERLORD, The Invasion Of Europe, 6 June-28 August 1944. Apple II, Atari ST, or IBMPC.

SEVENTH FLEET, Modern Naval Combat In The Pacific Ocean. Apple II, Atari ST, C64/128, or IBMPC .

GOLAN FRONT, The 1973 Arab/Israeli War In The North. Apple II, Atari ST, C64/128, or IBMPC.

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC, The Ocean Lifeline, 1940-1944. Apple II, Atari ST, or IBMPC.

SIEG IN AFRIKA, The War In North Africa, 1940-1943. Apple II or C64/128.

FIFTH ESKADRA, Modern Naval Combat In The Mediterranian Sea. Apple II, Atari ST, C64/128, or IBMPC.

FALL GELB, The Fall Of France, Spring 1940. Apple II, Atari ST, C64/128, or IBMPC.

GREY SEAS, GREY SKIES, Tactical Modern Naval Combat. Apple II, Atari ST, C64/128, or IBMPC.

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*ORDERING INFORMATION, PLEASE READ CAREFULLY: If you cannot find the game you wish to purchase at your computer store or hobby shop, you may purchase it direct from Simulations Canada. All games are $60.00 each for Americans (including shipping), $80.00 each for Canadians (Fed. Tax & Shipping included), and $65.00 each for purchasers outside North America (including shipping). We will let cheques clear before shipping (6 weeks!), so money orders are preferred. PLEASE be sure to tell us the computer you own. **Purchasers outside Canada should send payment in U.S. funds.** Nova Scotians must add an extra 10% of the total for Provincial Tax.*

SIMULATIONS CANADA, P.O. Box 452
Bridgewater, Nova Scotia, Canada, B4V 2X6

Circle Reader Service #60

Continued from page 6

Peek

($49.95) & C64 ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #5.

Electronic Arts
1820 Gateway Drive
San Mateo, CA 94404

BUDOKAN: Ah grasshoppa! You have followed the path of enlightenment, and it leads to Budokan, the definitive martial arts simulation. Players have the opportunity to learn and master four martial arts, Karate, Kendo, Nunchaku, and Bo (does Bo know Bo?), each with 30 moves to master. After players have gained basic command of the moves through sparring with an instructor, they can fight opponents on three levels of difficulty. If they are successful they can then face the ultimate test of their skills at the Budokan. Gorgeous graphics and a nice sound track round out this outstanding package. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

Fanfare
c/o Britannica Software
345 Fourth Street
San Francisco, CA 94107

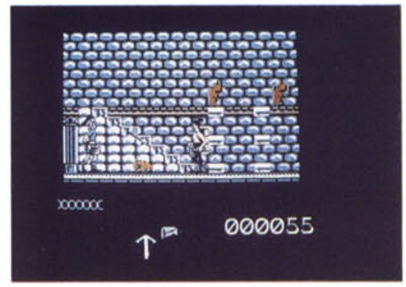
EYE OF HORUS: You don't have to be "born in Arizona" and "move to Babylonia" to play this action/exploration game set in Egyptian mythology. As the son of a god, you have the gift of avian transformation, and you must use this power to explore an ancient pyramid alive with metamorphosized gods, searching for the amulets needed to avenge your father's death at the hands of Set. (bump, spike) Amiga Circle Reader Service #7.

Free Spirit Software
PO Box 128
58 Noble Street
Kutztown, PA 19530

BRIDE OF THE ROBOT: Brad Stallion, intergalactic space stud, and his vessel, Big Thruster, are back in another adult graphic adventure from Free Spirit. Fighting a vicious hangover, Brad must rescue Miss Galaxy from a runaway robot with a bug in his sex drive. The game has a terrible parser, and worse puzzles, but a lot



WCLB Famous Courses



Artura



If it Moves Shoot It



It Came from the Desert



Monday Night Football



Budokan

of raunchy humor. Amiga ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #8.

GameTek
2999 N.E. 191st St.
Suite 800
N. Miami Beach, FL 33180

WHEEL OF FORTUNE: America's fav_rite game show goes gold with a new Gold Edition. This v_rsion has over a tho_sand new p_zzles to keep you spinning, and a pr_ce that won't land you on 'B_nkr_pt'. IBM, C64, and Apple II ($14.95). To buy a vowel, Circle Reader Service #9.

JEOPARDY: "I'll take Computer Games for $14.95." The answer is: "An updated version of a computer game based on a classic TV show, with 2,000 new answers that need a question." "What is Jeopardy: 25th Anniversary Edition?." IBM, C64, and Apple II ($14.95). Circle Reader Service #10.

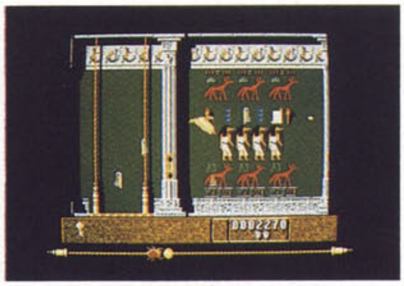
Microplay Software
180 Lakefront Drive
Hunt Valley, MD 21030

RICK DANGEROUS: Rick Dangerous is a "heavily armed, rigorously trained, and highly motivated" adventurer, who fights hostile Amazons, explores Egyptian temples, and destroys a Nazi missile base, among other heroic feats. The story sounds a lot like a certain movie hero and the action game plays a lot like something you'd see on a certain dedicated game machine. IBM, Amiga (34.95), and the C-64 (29.95). Circle Reader Service #11.

MicroSearch, Inc.
9896 S.W. Freeway
Houston, TX 77074

PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL SIMULATION: If you're looking for an extremely

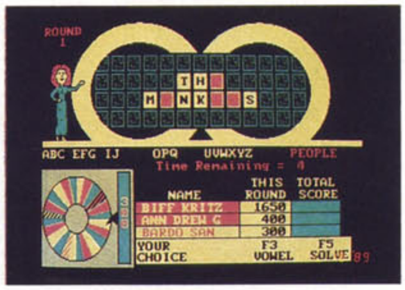
sophisticated football simulation, look no further. If you'd like an elegant interface along with it, you're out of luck. This program has everything: complete league play, statistics, weather conditions, instant replay, modem play, 136 offensive and 104 defensive plays, you name it. Unfortunately it's got a horrendously complicated command interface to boot. If you don't mind entering commands like "OR.HB8PFQ.FBLFLL" (A blocking assignment for a sweep) then this is the last football game you'll have to buy. Amiga ($34.95). Circle Reader Service #12.



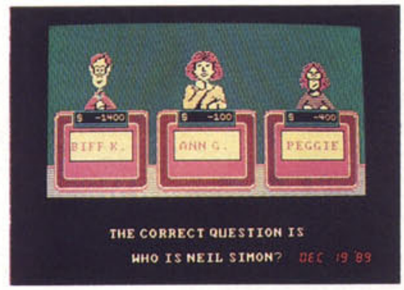
Eye of Horus



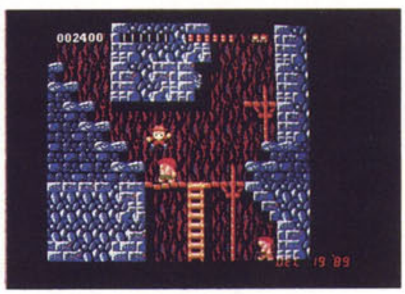
Bride of the Robot



Wheel of Fortune



Jeopardy!



Rick Dangerous



Pro Football Simulation

Miles Computing
1810 Gateway Drive
San Mateo, CA 94404

LIVING JIGSAWS: A popular rainy day past-time comes to life in this product. Players attempt to reconstruct beautiful, animated puzzles with pieces ranging in complexity from 'super easy' to 'hard'. The Help Elf will lend a hand if the player has trouble, and an animated sequence rewards the players success. IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #13.

Mindscape Inc.
3444 Dundee Road
Northbrook, IL 60062

SGT. SLAUGHTER'S MAT WARS: Players take the duel role of wrestler and manager in this simulation of the glamourous sport of championship wrestling. Players bid for wrestlers in an auction, place bets on their fighters, and then bite, scratch, and slug it out in the ring with the typical array of pile drives and head locks. C64 ($29.95). Circle Reader Service #14.

STAR TREK V: THE FINAL FRONTIER: The voyages of the starship Enterprise continue (what happened to the five year mission?) with the player in command of this action/adventure which, obviously enough, follows the plot of the most recent film. With an Enterprise at half capacity and under control of Sybok, the renegade vulcan, the player must fight off Klingon warships and avert an interstellar war; all this while on a journey to the legendary planet of Sha Ka Ree. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #15.

Psygnosis
P.O. Box 483
Addison, IL 60101

NEVER MIND: This is a unique, abstract strategy game where the player must reconstruct a scrambled painting in a 3 dimensional world. Transporting squares, dissolving tiles, and chess pieces complicate things, and a puzzle time limit keeps the action intense. The graphics are of typical Psygnosis quality (gorgeous!) and the game play, stimulating. Amiga. Circle Reader Service #16.

Omnitrend Software
P.O. Box 733
West Simsbury, CT 06092

BREACH 2: The Breach tour of duty continues with this new and improved version of the original squad-level game of tactical combat. New victory conditions, items, weapons, and opponents have been added, as well as improved graphics and a smoother interface (including diagonal movement). This is the first of Omnitrend's Interlocking Game System (IGS) modules, promised to work as a submodule of other games that will be released in the future. Amiga, IBM. Circle Reader Service #17.

Raecreations Software
7371 Pebblebrooke W. Dr.
Indianapolis, IN 46236

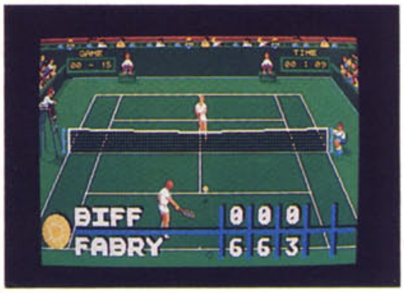
LAWMAN: This here's a wild west simulation created usin' the World Builder adventure creation system. Players become the green horn sheriff of a po-dunk town, filled with lawbreaking varmints and such. The town includes a General Store where shootin' irons can be purchased, a doctor for removing lead from yur hide, and a saloon where players can gamble their buckaroos playin' Faro and the Shell game. Tie yie yippy yippy yeah! Mac ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #18.

Sierra On-line Inc.
Coursegold, CA 93614

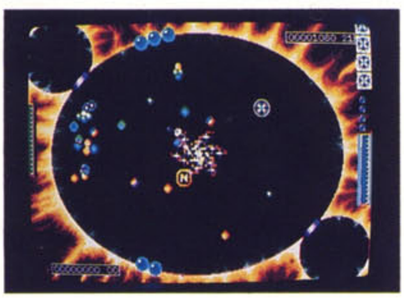
Leisure Suit Larry III: See feature article on page 18.



Leisure Suit Larry



Pro Tennis Tour



Vortex

UBI Soft
1810 Gateway Drive
San Mateo, CA 94404

PRO TENNIS TOUR: Are rainy days or an arthritic elbow keeping you away from the courts? Well with this tennis simulation you can play at Wimbledon, the US Open, Roland Garros, and the Austriailian Open without lacing up your sneaks. The game allows players to play an entire pro tournament circuit against 3 levels of computer competition. Players can compete against another player or they can practice with an intelligent tennis machine. IBM, ST ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #19.

Visionary Design Tech.
45 Whitehorn Cres.
North York, Ontario
Canada M2J 3B1

VORTEX: A swirling whirlpool of energy is the setting for this action game with a different spin. One or two players try to cool down the vortex by depriving it of its anti-matter fuel, while avoiding the molecular nasties that fly from its core. Amiga. Circle Reader Service #20.

Winter C.E.S.

Continued from page 47

gamers to encounter guerillas on the jungle rivers of Colombia, Panama and Vietnam.

In more traditional terms, **Dynamix** was demonstrating their *A-10 Tank Killer* scenario disks with a new campaign that automatically replaces the old ones. The new campaign is available free off the company's bulletin board or gamers may purchase a disk and documentation for $12.95. Speaking of **Dynamix**, *F-14 Tomcat* was originally developed by the company for **Activision**. It was a hot product on the C-64. Now, the MS-DOS version supports both AdLib and Roland boards, offers bit-mapped explosions, adjustable wings on the Tomcat, digitized voice command directives and ability to skip "flight school" if one so desires.

Simulation fans who like driving games will also have plenty to keep them busy in 1990. *Indianapolis 500: The Simulation* from **Electronic Arts** has just shipped. The physics of the model are more accurate than those in its predecessor, *Ferrari Formula I*. "Ferrari" was based on a two-point fulcrum, but "Indy" uses a four point fulcrum. Any adhesive change to any wheel causes a reaction. We felt like the cars handled much more realistically, plus there is all sorts of chrome, like "Instant Replay" and being able to turn completely around and crash head-on into other cars [Ed. Note: for the truly sick gamer (you know who you are!)]..

Spectrum-Holobyte was demonstrating *Stunt Driver*, a race course construction set that lets players drive Porsches, Mustangs, Vettes and more over courses that resemble a cross between a miniature golf course and a test track.

Place Your Bets

When the action gets fast and furious at the Las Vegas craps tables, observers have to move back and make way for the "players". Right now, there's more action than we can fit in this particular article. Next month, *CGW* will try to make the appropriate "points" regarding adventure/role-playing games and action games.

Finally, for those who wonder where *CGW* stands in this entertainment software "craps shoot", we have placed our presence firmly on the "Pass Line". We believe in technological advancement and believe that entertainment software will drive it. Right now, disk-based publishers show the kinds of creativity that we respect and believe that our readers will respond to. So, hand us those chips. We're betting with the shooters.





On the R.I.D. card provided opposite page 4, please rate the following games (if you have played them) and articles (if you have read them) by using a letter grade scale (I.e. A to F). Just rate the games as if you were an educator. As with the world of education, the scale will translate to:

A= Excellent

B= Above Average

C= Average

D= Below Average

F= Failure

If you wish, you may assign pluses (+) or minuses (-) to your letter grade (i.e. B+, B-, C+, C-, etc.). As always, rate only those games that you have played.

Over the next three issues we will rerate all of the games on our current R.I.D. list and a number of other titles as well. Remember that thousands of gamers will be making buying decisions based on the results of these ratings, so help your fellow gamer out and let him know what is a worthy purchase and what is not.

Demographics

(List the appropriate number)

1. What is your age ?

1 = Under 14 years old
2 = 14-17 years old
3 = 18-20 years old
4 = 21-30 years old
5 = 31-35 years old
6 = 36-40 years old
7 = 41-50 years old
8 = 51+ years old

2. What machine(s) do you play games on?

(List all numbers that apply. List the machine you use most often first, the others in decending order of use).

1 = IBM, clones, Tandy
2 = Amiga
3 = Apple 8 bit
4 = Apple IIgs
5 = Atari ST
6 = Atari 8 bit
7 = C-64/128
8 = Macintosh
9 = Other (specify)

3. How much time do you typically spend playing computer games each week?

1 = Less than 2 hours
2 = 2-5 hours
3 = 6-10 hours
4 = 11-20 hours
5 = 21-30 hours
6 = 31+ hours

RID #68 Questions

Games

4. Their Finest Hour (Lucasfilm)
5. F-19 Stealth Fighter (Microprose)
6. Sim City (Maxis)
7. Sword of Aragon (SSI)
8. Chessmaster 2100 (Software Toolworks)
9. Populous (Electronic Arts)
10. Red Storm Rising (Microprose)
11. Battlehawks 1942 (Lucasfilm)
12. M-1 Tank Platoon (Microprose)
13. Ultima V (Origin)
14. Blue Angels (Accolade)
15. Playmaker Football (Broderbund)
16. DeathTrack (Activision)
17. Hardball II (Accolade)
18. MechWarrior (Activision)
19. Psychic War (Kyodai)
20. War of the Lance (SSI)
21. Hero's Quest (Sierra)
22. Sword of the Samurai (Microprose)
23. ABC Monday Night Football (Data East)
24. Knights of Legend (Origin)
25. The Colonel's Bequest (Sierra)
26. White Death (Command Simulations)
27. Ghostbusters II (Activision)
28. Archipelagos (Brittanica)
29. Dark Heart of Uukrul (Broderbund)
30. Mean Streets (Access)
31. Kriegsmarine (SimCan)
32. Hoyle's Official Book of Games (Sierra)
33. It Came From The Desert (Cinemaware)
34. Overrun! (SSI)
35. Death Bringer (Spotlight)
36. Harley-Davidson: Road to Sturgis (Mindscape)
37. The Fool's Errand (Miles Computing)
38. Puzzle Gallery (Miles Computing)
39. Indianapolis 500 (Electronic Arts)
40. Budokan (Electronic Arts)

Articles

41. Joan of Arc: Sword & Siege Review
42. Leisure Suit Larry III Hints
43. DeathTrack Review
44. The Colonel's Bequest Review
45. Gold of the Americas Review
46. Action Stations Review
47. Harpoon Review
48. Scorpion's Mail
49. Swords of Twilight Survey
50. Tank Review

Questions

51. Please choose the types of books which you read from the following list:
a) mystery,
b) western,
c) science fiction,
d) fantasy,
e) history,
f) biography,
g) science,
h) business, and/or
i) travel.

Circle Reader Service #64 »

- BLASTEROIDS: C-64/128, Amiga, Atari ST. Coming Soon: IBM
- VINDICATORS: Amiga, Atari ST Coming Soon: C-64/128, IBM, Apple II GS
- XYBOTS: C-64/128, Amiga, Atari ST. Coming Soon: IBM
- ROLLING THUNDER: C-64/128
- APB: IBM, C-64/128, Amiga, Atari ST







IF ACTION SPEAKS LOUDER THAN WORDS, YOU'D BE DEAF BY NOW.



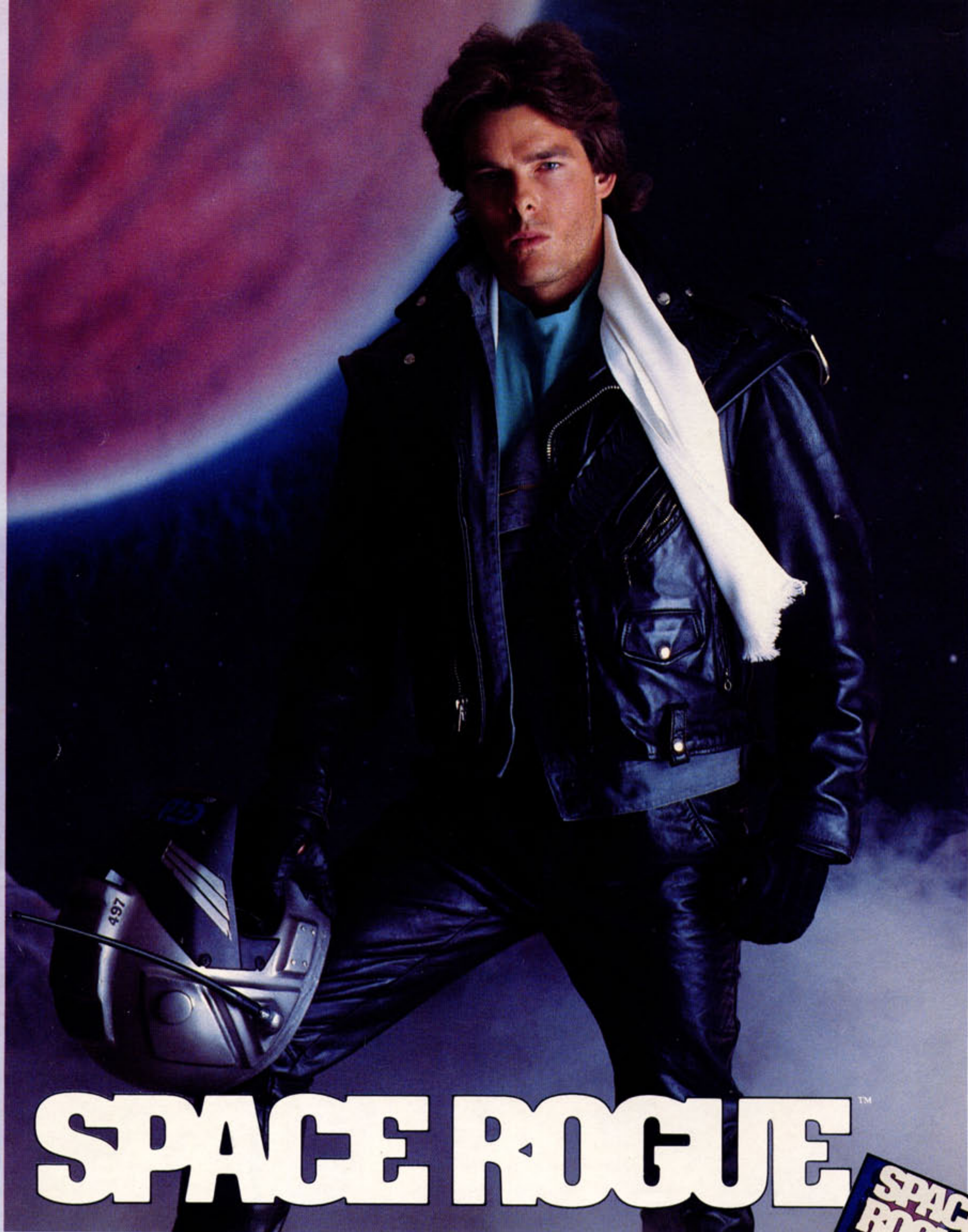


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